1992

Mother Outline: A Critique Of Gender In Blake's Aesthetics And "the Four Zoas"

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MOTHER OUTLINE: A CRITIQUE OF GENDER IN BLAKE'S AESTHETICS AND *THE FOUR ZOAS*

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
August, 1992

ISBN 0-315-75357-9

Canada

ABSTRACT

Recent feminist critics of William Blake have drawn attention to the marginalization of a split metaphor of the female in his work as either passively good or actively evil. Not only does this metaphor constitute a stereotypically negative view of femininity, but Blake goes on to resolve its conflictedness by absorbing the female into a male collective of psychic faculties or Zoas known as the Human Form Divine. The work of Julia Kristeva, when placed within a specifically feminist revision of psychoanalysis, can help us to understand the implicit misogyny of Blake's gender-coded myth as symptomatic of broader cultural tensions. The dominant discourse assigning "male" and "female" designations to elements within Western thought can also be understood as the dominance of a paternal symbolic order over a maternal semiotic. Blake's valorization of a masculine Human Form Divine at the expense of a conflicted female metaphor thus encodes a repression, by the superego, of preoedipal conflicts activated by the mother-child dyad.

Blake is not totally assimilated by the symbolic but employs metaphors of a preoedipal incestuous dynamic as part of a major revolutionary tendency in his work. This overt liberating aspect, however, is compromised by Blake's Human Form Divine as a sexist metaphor for a supposedly utopian psycho-social condition. Nevertheless, the semiotic rhythms initially mobilized by Blake continue to function and erupt in ways which rescue him from a regressive masculinist appropriation. Finally, the theoretical formations developed in this thesis, through an engagement with Kristeva, are specifically suited to a study of Blake. Kristeva makes it possible to combine psychoanalysis with cultural

criticism insofar as the semiotic not only disrupts language and subjectivity through the agency of poetry, but also destabilizes the patriarchal conceptual hierarchies which underwrite capitalism. Hence both Blake and Kristeva view poetry as being inherently subversive.

This thesis examines Blake's aesthetic theory and his epic *The Four Zoas* as texts in which he affirms the Human Form Divine as either a delineated masculine figure or the integrated psychic body of the Zoas. Blake's aesthetic privileges a firm bounding outline while simultaneously rejecting practices which blur this line as if they were excremental substances dangerous to the body. For Kristeva, such violent expulsion rejects the mother in a movement known as abjection. Blake's epic also affirms the masculine form by narrating the chronology of its psycho-social development into a "regenerate Man" who subordinates the female Emanation Vala and her capacity to represent semiotic conflicts associated with the mother.

Yet at significant points in both these texts Blake includes maternal figures who become disruptive sites for a return of the repressed. As either "Mother outline" or the "hermaphrodite," these figures scramble phallocentric binaries at the very moment of their affirmation, creating zones of undecidability homologous with a deconstructive nondifferentiation of difference and nondifference. Even though Blake's phallocentrism contradicts the overt revolutionary thrust of his work, these local surfacings of a repressed maternal semiotic demonstrate Kristeva's point that there are forces in poetry and art which function as a revolutionary and cultural critique of traditional gender-coded hierarchies.

Chapter one of the thesis covers Blake's reception by feminist critics, the theoretical context in which their observations become psychoanalytically significant, and the historical forces influencing Blake which call for the application to his work of a feminist inspired revision of psychoanalysis. Chapter

two investigates the phallocentric nature of Blake's aesthetic theory and its deconstruction through the maternal figure of Mother outline. Finally, chapter three discusses *The Four Zoas* as a chronology of psychic development in which the semiotic first explodes, is then repressed, and at last resurfaces through the character of Vala as mother and hermaphrodite.

To my mother,
whose life and death are
the "hiding places of power"
to which I continually return.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has been a long, solitary and demanding task. During the time of its composition, much of my life was spent in a small study space in the D.B. Weldon Library, measuring about forty square feet. Fortunately, the fourth-floor window of my monastic cell had a panoramic view, including the city of London, Ontario to the south, an often cloudless sky, and a healthy sampling of tree-tops contributing to the community's reputation as the "Forest City." Nevertheless the job of writing left little time for window-gazing except during those moments when I wished that Blake would speak to me from out of the heavens as he did for Allen Ginsberg so many years ago. Without this kind of inspiration I have had to rely on more human sources of support in order to see this project through to the end.

Of all the people who have prompted this dissertation towards completion, four women deserve special mention. I would like to first thank my wife, Gail Madill, whose optimism and cheerfulness assisted me during those times when the entire project seemed to be drifting in the doldrums. In spite of the incredible demands made upon her in other areas, Gail continues to reinforce the value of my work and professional goals.

I am also very grateful to my supervisors Professor Tilottama Rajan and Professor Angela Esterhammer, both of whom have taught me what it means to "not cease from Mental Fight." The accuracy of their observations and criticisms, together with their belief in the project, have continually energized my writing and increased my own self-expectations. Like some of the coaches I had when I was

younger, they always knew how to get the most out of me for the sake of my development as a scholar and mental-athlete.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the untiring efforts of Janet Williams who graciously accepted the task of typing the manuscript and helped keep the writing of the thesis on schedule.

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NOTE ON BLAKE CITATIONS

All references to William Blake's poetry and prose are from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake.* 1965; Newly Revised. Ed. David V. Erdman, With a Commentary by Harold Bloom. New York: Doubleday, 1988. I have deviated somewhat from traditional methods of citing Blake in the hope of streamlining references according to MLA guidelines of readability and common sense. References to the poetry of Blake are made parenthetically in the body of the thesis with the details of these references cited in the following order: abbreviated title of work (where applicable); plate or page number; line number (where applicable). In most cases I have eliminated the page number in Erdman's edition since poems can be found either through his table of contents or the index. In some cases I have retained Erdman's page number when poems or drafts of poems cannot otherwise be found. Also if the context in which the citation occurs clearly integrates details ordinarily found in parentheses, then these details will be deleted from the citation. For example, in chapter three on *The Four Zoas*, all references to this poem give only the page and line number. Yet when citing other poems in this chapter, abbreviated titles are included if there is a risk of confusion. Finally all prose references to either Blake or Erdman are given with the page number in Erdman's edition.

The most frequently cited abbreviated titles are *J*: *Jerusalem*, *M*: *Milton*, *E*: *Europe*, *V*: *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *Th*: *The Book of Thel*, *MHH*: *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *BA*: *The Book of Ahania*, *T*: *Tiriel*, *SE*: *Songs of Experience.*

In quoting Blake I have retained Erdman's editorial symbols:

> Roman type within square brackets comprises matter supplied by the editor. Angle brackets enclose letters or words written to replace deletions, or as additions--but not including words written immediately following and in the same ink as a canceled word.
>
> (E788)

On some occasions I have also used square brackets to help clarify the syntax and sense of Blake's prose.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITICAL, HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR A CRITIQUE OF GENDER IN BLAKE'S WORK

Blake's Conflicted Sexual Text

One of the most provocative developments in recent Blake criticism has been the work of a growing number of feminist critics challenging his portrayal of women. In almost all cases this revision in Blake criticism focuses on his contradictory attitudes towards the female. In her seminal article "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry" Susan Fox agrees with mainstream Blakean criticism in identifying female configurations as "artistic and philosophical principles."[1] Blake's use of feminine metaphors, however, reveals "a serious self-contradiction in his vision of the universe" which earlier formalist critics either ignore or glibly resolve.[2] Rather than accept the androgyne as evidence of gender interdependence and mutuality, Fox argues that the female counterpart is either "inferior and dependent" or is "unnaturally and disastrously dominant" (75). Moreover, this split in female metaphors between the weak and the power-hungry is consolidated within Blake's myth through the creation of Beulah and the Female Will as specific feminine spaces. Fox foregrounds the contradiction between gender equality in eternity and female sado-masochism, casting this latter condition as a split within the domain of the feminine itself between inferior and dominant tendencies. Not only is sexual mutuality undermined by female stereotypes but these stereotypes are themselves at odds with each other. Hence, Blake's myth is a doubly conflicted text fissured along the fault line of the feminine.

Fox sees Blake as splitting the female figure along clearly ethical lines. On the one hand, "the only positive females are those so devoid of will, or at least the power to realize their will [that they appear] to be melodramatically helpless." On the other hand, there is "no female power but evil female power" (80). Fox is not insensitive to the equivocal and complicated ways in which Blake destabilizes this schematic rendering of the female. Her apologetics take the form of a mini-biography in which she sees Blake as having initially and "automatically" assumed cultural stereotypes in his early poetry, perhaps in response to his own marital difficulties with Catherine (80, 82-83). Nevertheless, she argues that by the "late prophecies Blake seems at least to be trying to rescue the idea of a separate but equal female principle from the bitterness and condescension his earlier uneasiness about women had imposed upon it" (79). In spite of Blake's struggles to reverse an early misogynist trend, his female characters/metaphors continue to display the marks of one form of marginalization or another. The two positive spaces of female marginalization are Beulah and the state of innocence depicted in the *Songs of Innocence.* Although positive, Beulah is "tainted by condescension" since it is "necessarily a limited state" (77). It functions as a kind of rest home for those who either cannot withstand Edenic intellectual battle or who are in need of some rejuvenation prior to reentering the fray. Although those who reside in Beulah need not all be female, their condition of weakness *is.* Moreover, the majority of its inhabitants are female Emanations, and although their weakness may only be a metaphor, this metaphor disturbs whatever "thematic balance" Blake attempts in his later work (85). Aside from Beulah itself, the topography of innocence examined in *Songs* is taken as a "Proto-Beulaic" or "*beu*colic" landscape (77).[3] Fox claims that "the positive internal powers of the realm are female," although this has recently been challenged in keeping with what is generally perceived by other critics as the

complex irony of the *Songs* (77).[4] Accepting Fox's argument for the moment, the natural inhabitants of innocence are women and children, the former acting as either mothers or nurses who protect the young. Nevertheless, this maternal power is "severely restricted," since ultimate "constructive" power resides with males such as the piper, Christ and God, who occasionally intervene from outside the boundaries of Innocence.[5]

Other positive female configurations, according to Fox, share the inferiority and passivity displayed by Beulah and the state of Innocence. *Thel* continues the pattern set up by the *Songs of Innocence*, turning the vales of Har into another enclosed female space. Although the "pastoral female regents of the vales" successfully nurture and care for their young, as they do in *Songs*, the decision itself to remain within this enclosure becomes a form of weakness and a failure to act (78). Thel's passivity, as a refusal of experience, undermines the maternal goodness of Har by disclosing the myopics of innocence.[6] With Oothoon, however, we are dealing with the one female character who comes closest to being both active and good. As the central character of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Oothoon refuses to become a sexual possession and item of exchange between men while also championing the values of intellectual freedom, imagination and free love. Recently, however, there have been numerous articles on Oothoon's ultimate failure to act in spite of all her positive, assertive and visionary qualities.[7] For her own part, Fox acknowledges the contradiction in Oothoon between her attempt to gain freedom from the "impositions of male authority" and her final victimization "by powers completely outside her control" (80-81). Once again, the gender-coded subtext calls for recourse to an external, male, revolutionary force capable of ending victimization. What Oothoon could not do for herself, and what Theotormon refused to do for her, can perhaps be performed by another male agent (i.e. Orc). With the character of Ololon from Blake's minor epic, *Milton*, we

are dealing with another positive female figure who displays commitment, courage and an identification with Jesus. Ololon's quest for reunification with Milton and her final transformation into an ark and a dove contribute largely to the self-annihilation and recreation necessary for a sexual dialectic of mutual and equal contraries. Yet Fox maintains that she initiates no action but only responds to Milton's act: "She comes to her imperious master a humble, questioning bride, bearing like a good handmaiden the robes which will transform them both" (86). Although good, she remains dependent and meek. Finally, with *Jerusalem*, Blake makes one last attempt at creating an uncompromised positive female figure. Notwithstanding Jerusalem's superiority to Albion, as "more nearly Edenic, less perverted," she remains little more than a means to an end (87). Her function mimics that of other female Emanations, who serve as a conduit permitting communication between males.

The mirror reflection of these positive/passive female configurations can be found in that group of pernicious characters ordinarily gathered under the heading of the Female Will. As a "lust for . . . dominance which disrupts all proper order," the Female Will is personified by such actively subversive characters as Enitharmon, Rahab, Vala and Tirzah (80). It is interesting that Fox does not dwell at length on these figures and stops only long enough to cite their culpability in the Fall and their persistence in the fallen condition. Perhaps the negative activity of the Female Will is self-evident to Fox and other critics, while the shortcomings of Blake's "heroines" require more space for supportive argumentation. Yet there are important questions which Fox fails to raise in this regard. Why should Blake have such an overwhelmingly negative view of the female even to the point of undermining his more positive configurations and continuing attempts to portray an equal and mutual sexual dialectic? It would appear that Blake inhabits an unusually strong yet negative female metaphor of

which he cannot divest himself despite his greatest creative efforts to modify and sanitize his early stereotypes. Fox's biographical surmise suggests a possible explanation when she observes that "one of the most moving and provocative features of Blake's poetry is its profound psychological probing into sexual and familial relations" (76). It is in this psycho-sexual realm that she locates not only Blake's ambiguity with respect to the female but also the manner in which this split configuration contradicts his more abstract portrayal of sexual relations within the context of "a perfection of humanity defined in part by the complete mutuality of its interdependent genders" (75). Fox, however, does not go far enough in providing an explanation for the conflictual nature of Blake's text.

Alicia Ostriker reaches conclusions similar to those of Fox but does so through a general survey of Blake's sexual attitudes without specifically focusing on the female as metaphor. Ostriker outlines four main chronological phases in the surface development of Blake's sexual theories: a celebration of sexuality which simultaneously attacks repression, a vision of human imaginative perfection "as a complex web of gender complementarities and interdependencies," sexuality as a trap, and finally a view of "the female principle as subordinate to the male" (211). Ostriker's analysis of Blake's development is, I believe, more accurate than the one suggested by Fox–that he adopted stereotypical metaphors of femaleness in his *early* poems and tried unsuccessfully to redress them in his later works. This, however, does not compromise Fox's conclusions, which are consistent with those of Ostriker in detecting a conflict between Blake's celebration of desire as something "equally distributed between genders" and his paranoiac fear of threatening sexuality "as a female phenomenon." As a defense against a dangerous female sexual snare, Blake finally casts woman in a "supportive, subordinate role" (229). Hence, Ostriker also argues for the ambiguity of female configurations in Blake as a conflict between the passively good and actively evil. As far as

Oothoon is concerned, she may be good and wise "but she is completely powerless . . . imprisoned in . . . passivity . . . [and] must submit." This situation for females does not improve in the "late prophecies" since "the better the late females are, the more passive, the more submissive and obedient they also are." On the other hand, "Enitharmon and Vala are active and evil," and reinforce the conflict between "female figures [who] are either powerful or good; never both" (230).

Even though Fox fails, unlike Ostriker, to discuss the contradiction between Blake's early celebration of sexual freedom and his subsequent paranoia she does, like Ostriker, cover its dual consequences: a divided notion of female sexuality which undermines Blake's androgynous myth. Ostriker and Fox also concur on the negative implications of Beulah as an enclosed, specifically female, space. Although Beulah is the source of inspired poetry, Ostriker observes that it becomes progressively malignant through successive works as a female enclosure and form of entrapment. As a "vacation spot for beings who cannot sustain the strenuous mental excitement of Eden" it functions as a region of "confinement, limitation, [and] illusion" (227). Not only is Beulah a place of "lovely delusions" (*J* 17:27) but

> Love in Beulah inevitably brings a depletion of energy and the advent of jealousies, murders, moral law, revenge, and the whole panoply of inhuman cruelties the poet has taught us to struggle against.
>
> (229)

Like Fox, Ostriker foregrounds Beulah's status as a preserve for passive females but expands upon what she sees, in *Jerusalem*, as its more predatory aspects.

Ostriker's analysis of Blake's problematic female leads her to conclude that he attempts a resolution through the creation of what is essentially a homosexual myth, creating an edenic realm that transcends sexuality through a mingling of male with male (229).[8] At the end of both *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, female

Emanations take a "self-immolative plunge" through which they are absorbed by their male counterparts as a prerequisite for a masculine, apocalyptic reunion (230). Here Ostriker adds to Fox's analysis, arguing that Blake's androgynous myth is itself beset by an inequality more destructive to the female than even that imagined by Fox. Androgyny presupposes a form of male vampirism practised upon the female:

> But at its most extreme, Blake's vision goes beyond proposing an ideal of dominance-submission or priority-inferiority between the genders. As a counter-image to the intolerable idea of female power, female containment and "binding" of man to mortal life, Blake wishfully imagines that the female can be *reabsorbed* by the male, be contained within him, and exist Edenically not as a substantial being but as an *attribute*. Beyond the wildest dreams of Lévi-Strauss, the ideal female functions as a medium of interchange among real, that is to say male, beings.
>
> (232; emphasis added)

Like Fox, Ostriker believes that these contradictions revolving around Blake's female configuration do not achieve any final reconciliation but persist throughout his work. For her part, Fox believes that we "cannot apologize away Blake's occasional shrillness towards women" nor can we "ignore the abstract quality of his sexual divisions." To do either would be to "lose half the greatness of Blake's poetry" (77). Likewise, Ostriker claims that Blake's sexual antagonisms are "the life of his poetry" and that we should, as critics, not only "discover" but "admire, a large poet's large inconsistencies" (233).

Finally, also like Fox, Ostriker becomes reductive by providing a purely biographical explanation for these inconsistencies, focusing on "marital friction" as a "reasonable source" as well as on the absence of "vigorous [female] equal[s]" as companions after Mary Wollstonecraft's death (233). From all accounts, the

submissiveness of Catherine Blake may serve as a model for Blake's passive/good females but does not provide a suitable explanation for his sexual paranoia. Also, Wollstonecraft's putative relationship to Blake was, in all likelihood, facilitated by their joint participation in the circle of publisher Joseph Johnson (1737-1809). As a result, Blake illustrated Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* and was perhaps influenced enough by her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to use it as a possible source for Oothoon's views on sexual freedom and restraint. Yet the notion of Wollstonecraft as "vigorous equal" is open to question.[9] When all is said and done, Ostriker does not explain the depth and persistence of Blake's profound sexual ambivalence. As long as this question of "Why?" remains unanswered, criticism only does part of its job by delineating the shape of a text's conflicting surfaces.

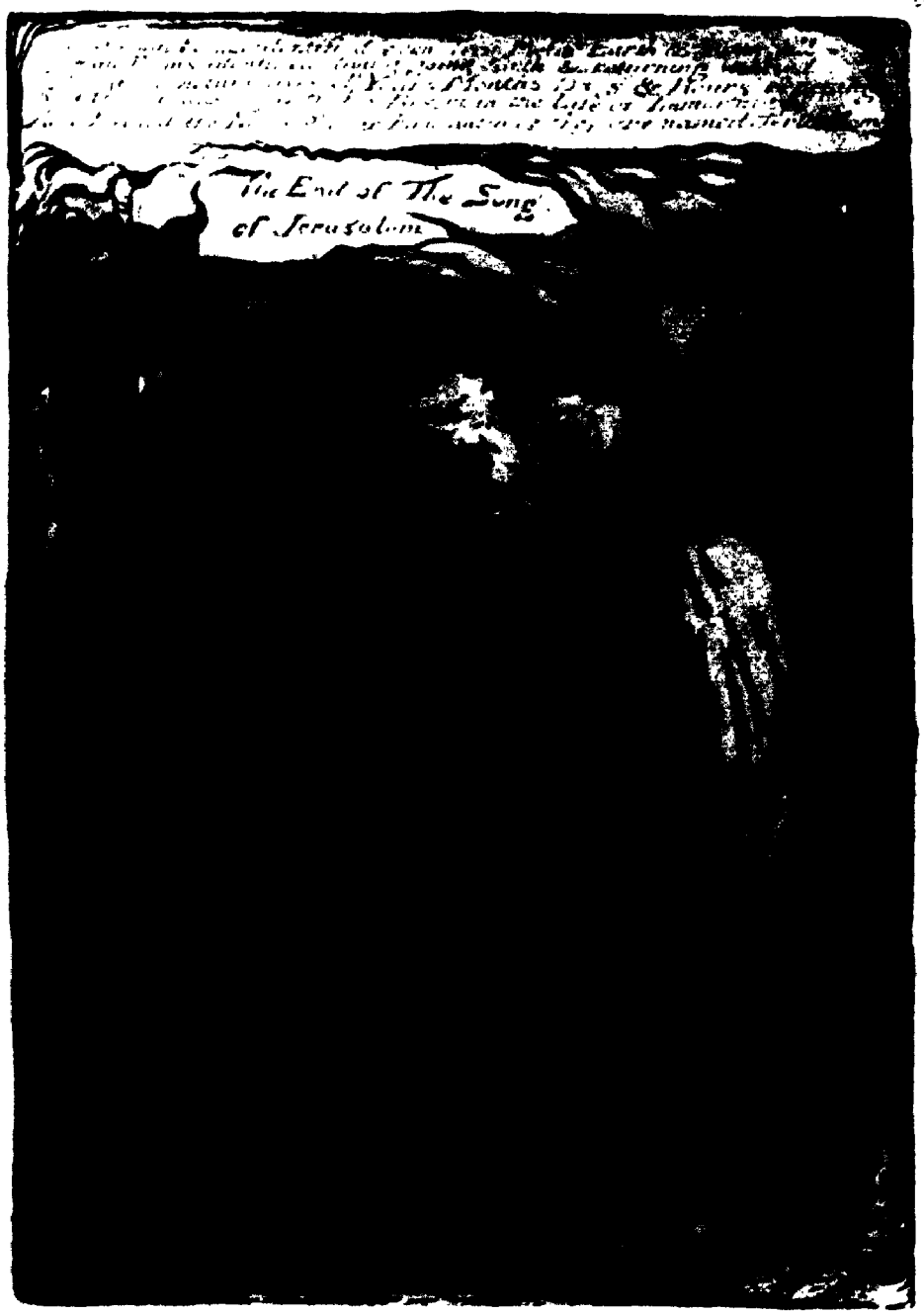
Anne K. Mellor's article "Blake's Portrayal of Women" rehearses many of the preceding arguments while corroborating them with evidence drawn from Blake's visual art. She begins by observing that Blake's androgyny, as a condition of "total sexual equality," is "belied by [his] consistently sexist portrayal of women." This includes poetic *and* visual metaphors which "depict women as either passively dependent on men, or as aggressive and evil" (148). Much of what has already been said about Thel, Oothoon, Ololon, Jerusalem, Enitharmon, Rahab, Tirzah, Vala and Leutha is repeated by Mellor. Moreover, the androgynous ideal is still seen as subordinating the female to the male element, with the female incapable of independent existence. Blake, according to Mellor, consistently follows through on this subordination in his visual art, including his artistic division of labour as contained in his poetry. In *The Four Zoas* it is Los who has the important task of delineating the outline or design of forms which will embody Spectres of the dead and make it possible for them to participate in cosmic regeneration. Meanwhile, Los's Emanation, Enitharmon, is left with the task of

filling in the colours. Given the importance that Blake places upon hard and determinate outline, "that where there are no lineaments there can be no character" (E540), it is not hard to guess at the relative merits of these tasks. This unequal divison of labour continues unabated in the metropolitan divison of artistic neighborhoods or boroughs between Golgonooza's Furnaces and the Looms of Cathedron.[10]

Turning specifically to Blake's visual art, Mellor claims that the "human form divine" is masculine while the female constitutes a garment or veil (150). This observation supplements her earlier work, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, in which she does not consider issues of gender. In revising her previous position, Mellor claims that subordination of the female, as a mere accoutrement of masculine divinity, is visually portrayed as the liberated Jerusalem on plate 99 (Fig. 1) of the text which bears her name. It is significant that she is "portrayed so ambiguously that critics have seen this figure both as female and as male" (151). Mellor discounts the interpretation of such ambiguity as "a triumphant visual image of androgyny." Instead, she draws attention to the fact that *only* the female figure of Jerusalem is ambiguous while there is no mistaking the masculine, sexual identity of Albion/Christ/Jehovah. Hence we have a masculine absorption of the feminine without any mutual sexual symbiosis:

> Blake has presented the ultimately liberated Jerusalem as masculinized, but he has *not* imaged the liberated Albion/Christ/Jehovah as feminized. The long white mustache and beard of a male is prominent in the over-arching, dominating figure of the old man. Here a male nude form has absorbed the female form, but there is no parallel absorption of femininity by the masculine figure.
>
> (152)

Figure No. 1. Plate 99 from *Jerusalem*. Taken from *Jerusalem: A Facsimile of the Illuminated Book*, London: Trianon, 1951.


The End of The Song
of Jerusalem

Other examples cited by Mellor in support of her argument include plate 28 of *Jerusalem* (Fig. 2) in which the "same physical image" is used in the depiction of the right hand figure as either male or female, depending on whether one views the final copy or the proof sheet. Of the two figures who embrace on plate 28, the left hand one is decidedly male while the right hand figure, seen only from behind, makes it difficult for us to determine whether it is a male or a female nude. Hence the controversy surrounding this figure leaves us only two options. If it is female, then its anatomical similarity to a male figure is further evidence of the absorption of feminity by the masculine figure. If it is male, then it supports Blake's "hostility to the female body as well as his homosexual celebration of the male body" (152). In either case we are dealing with the subordination of the female in Blake's visual art. Nor does Blake's portrayal of a beardless Christ in such poems as "A Little Boy Lost" necessarily signify a feminization of the male figure, since it is consistent with a long iconographical tradition of clean-shaven saviours dating as far back as the fourth century. Moreover, there are examples of Blake's taking pains to foreground Christ's masculinity (i.e. *Christ Girding Himself with Strength* and Blair's *Grave*), thus implying that any sexual ambiguity in other portrayals more than likely represents an appropriation of the female by the male. In making these observations, Mellor emphasizes Blake's adherence to the visual aesthetics of Romantic Classicism and its "visual glorification of the masculine human body" (152).[11] Finally, Mellor's argument that "in Blake's metaphoric system, the masculine is both logically and physically prior to the feminine" is directed against those who see him as "an advocate of androgyny or sexual equality" (153-54).

While Fox, Ostriker and Mellor survey the conflicted nature of Blake's female figure, they do not provide us with a satisfying explanation of why his text valorizes the male over and above this divided female. There are other critics, however, like Norma A. Greco and Brenda Webster, who agree with them in their

Figure No. 2. Plate 28 from *Jerusalem*. Taken from *Jerusalem: A Facsimile of the Illuminated Book*, London: Trianon, 1951.

assessment of the divided female yet go on to identify this figure as the mother. This is an important turn in the direction of the criticism surrounding Blake's female figure since it opens up the possibility of a psychoanalytic reading. Specifically, one could raise the question as to whether or not incest and its prohibition are issues pertinent to an understanding of the divided female figure and her marginalization in Blake's text. Blake deals with incest openly in such works as *Tiriel*, *The Book of Ahania*, Night V of *The Four Zoas* and some of his illustrations to *The Book of Urizen* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He also deals with incest in a more oblique manner in some of *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the Preludium to *America* and some of his other songs and ballads to be discussed in subsequent chapters. For now, however, it is important to underline the fact that I do not intend to use anecdote and apocrypha to ground my discussion of Blake's conflicted female in Blake's biography. The discussion of incest as a dynamic in Blake's text is not read as part of a reductionist interpretation of the work as a symptomatic derivative of his own personal psychosexual conflicts. Although there may be an Oedipus complex in Blake's work this does not mean that there is a corresponding Oedipus complex in Blake. The figure of incest in Blake's text will be the subject of a further section. For the present it is sufficient to indicate how other critics have linked Blake's conflicted female with the figure of the mother.

Several recent critics have focused on the significance of the mother figure for Blake in particular and Romanticism in general. Norma A. Greco begins her article "Mother Figures In Blake's *Songs Of Innocence* and The Female Will" on a familiar note, observing that "Blake's treatment of women has been a vexed issue for critics because Blake himself is so inconsistent, ambivalent and complex in his portrayal of the female." Like Fox, Ostriker and Mellor she identifies this conflict as one generated by the difference between a "malevolent Female Will" and a

"benevolent nurturer and helpmate [who] is passive and dependent." Moreover, she equates the Female Will with an "oppressive mothering principle" which predates the appearance of "mother Enitharmon" (1:4) in *Europe* since it can be found at the virtual beginning of Blake's career (1). Hence her overall analysis of Blake's "development" is similar to Ostriker's in that both see his corpus as perpetually conflicted along sexual lines.

For Greco, the irony inherent in *Songs* reveals itself as a protective maternal love which doubles as an insidiously repressive force, inhibiting and destroying the child's inborn divine energy (2). Beginning with "Cradle Song," Greco argues that its maternal guardian is not entirely reliable or trustworthy as far as the child's welfare is concerned. The poem creates an identity between the mother and her child in so far as both display Christ-like attributes. In spite of present or expected adversity an inborn divinity will have the power to allay suffering. The mother weeps over her sleeping child as Christ wept over her, while her infant child moans "dovelike" (ll.13, 16) and weaves its brows into an "infant crown" (l.6) (of thorns). Although both mother and child are imitations of Christ's suffering, it is the outline in the child's face of the "Holy image" (l.22) which will have ultimate power to assuage pain. Yet the word "beguiles" appears three times in the poem (ll.12, 16, 32) and problematizes it by suggesting an element of deceit. The innate divinity of innocence may be protective but only manages this as delusion. It may beguile the "livelong night" (l.12) (of our souls) by providing a specious peace. By appearing to advocate such a peace, the mother potentially disarms her child, teaching passive acceptance of present suffering in expectation of future heavenly reward. The poem leaves open the question of whether or not the mother's resignation will effectively quell the terrors of experience by pacifying the child.

The position of the mother in "Infant Joy" is equally problematic: her presence too appears less than benign, as she seems to 'swallow up' the child's voice and identity. The poem's design places the child in the center of a double enclosure which is formed by two pairs of brackets, an outer pair of overarching, flame-like foliage and an inner pair of two women: a mother and a possible mother substitute (Fig. 3). This double enclosure can be both protective and suffocating. Similarly, there is an ambivalence in the mother's respect for the child's voice in the first stanza and her appropriation of it in the second.

Finally, in "The Little Black Boy" the mother instructs her black child in a Christianity which supports the self-abnegation of the body and consequently provides ideological justification for slavery. By using the metaphors of black "sun-burnt" body and white soul (l.16), the mother not only teaches denial of bodily energy but also encourages passive acceptance and long-suffering endurance of the world's 'heat' in the hope of future eternal life. Like the mother in "Cradle Song," this mother encourages a child-like, Christian innocence which may be protective but is also, simultaneously, a form of imprisonment and delusion.

Greco explains the presence of an "oppressive mothering principle" in *Songs* from an historical and cultural perspective, arguing, like Jackie DiSalvo, that "'the family reinforces society's repressive institutions'" (12). Greco rehearses DiSalvo's position that the mother is herself the "victim of institutionalized forms of oppression" including economic and political oppression within a patriarchal society that makes her a possession of both father and husband (11-12). Her victimization is further reinforced by the religious mythologizing of woman, which extolls such self-denying virtues as chastity and piety (11). The damaging psychic and social consequences of such a denial of desire in the mother creates a dynamic in which motherhood becomes the only socially sanctioned form of "ego-gratification" available to women (12). Consequently her own repression gets

Figure No. 3. "Infant Joy" from *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience.* Taken from *The Songs of Innocence*, London: Trianon, 1963.


I have no name
I am but two days old.
What shall I call thee?
I happy am
Joy is my name
Sweet joy befall thee!
Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee!
Thou dost smile.
I sing the while
Sweet joy befall thee.

passed along to the child in a psychic process which Blake, in *Songs of Innocence*, represents as a displacement of the mother's victimization onto the child itself. Motherhood may provide a protective and nurturing enclave for the child within the mother-child dyad, yet the historical and social conditions which produce motherhood, in eighteenth-century England, also turn it into an oppressive agency. For Greco, then, Blake's conflicted female metaphor is explained by contradictions inherent within the social configuration of motherhood.

The one critic who has perhaps done the most to account for Blake's conflicted sexual text is Brenda S. Webster, who also focuses on Blake's contradictory attitudes toward sexuality in pointing out that "Liberated sexuality seems a source of high value for Blake–he links it with vision and art--but sexuality also elicits his most hostile, negative, and regressive images" ("Blake" 204). The "emotional dynamite" of Blake's attitudes toward sexuality and women erupts in three developmental phases which are psychologically connected. These include an initial stage, when Blake writes "revolutionary prophecies" in which women and sexuality are sources of salvation; a transitional stage in which women and sexuality become increasingly negative, are held responsible for the Fall and are marginalized as the Female Will; and a third, predominantly Christian stage characterized by the elimination of independent females and their reabsorption into the body of man ("Blake" 206-210). The psychosexual linchpin connecting these stages as an organizational principle is Blake's susceptibility to his own intrapsychic Oedipal dramas including incestuous oral greed for the mother, rivalry with the father, and fear over the mother's retaliation due to his excessive, infantile demands ("Blake" 210). Within this fantasy structure one can begin to discern a dualistic vision of woman as either a completely satisfying nurturer and lover or as a vindictive and castrating bitch. In Blake's early works, this dualism articulates itself through binary oppositions between figures like the Lily in *Thel* or

the figure of Pestilence in *Tiriel*. In *Thel*, the Lilly as "gentle maid . . . nourish[es] the innocent lamb" (1:22; 2:5) by allowing him to crop her flowers, and thus becomes a metaphoric "wish for a mother's unlimited giving, even if it means her death." In *Tiriel*, however, the figure of Pestilence is invoked by a paternal tyrant as a retaliatory curse on a primal horde of sons who have "killed their mother by greedily draining her life" ("Blake" 210-11). The "fogs" and "poisons" which drop from the "garments" of Pestilence are versions of the "northern fogs" called up by Tiriel earlier in the poem to "choke" his sons (5:8-10; 1:43). By killing Tiriel's sons through a form of oral incorporation, these fogs become a demonic parody of the nursing mother as she retaliates for her murder. Hence the seeds of Blake's poetic development are already present in the psychological issues which his early work clearly broaches.

Nevertheless Blake's early revolutionary prophecies owe more to *Thel's* Lilly than to *Tiriel's* Pestilence. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, for example, is interpreted by Webster as a fantasy enactment of the Family Romance, including the portrayal of Oedipal strife between Bromion and Theotormon over Oothoon as a generous and nonpossessive mother who is free from the taint of superego restraint. Unlike Wollstonecraft, who argues for reason in women and for the development of mind rather than female sensibility, Blake presents us with a female metaphor that is "totally benevolent and totally available."[12] Not only does Blake provide us with an infantile "male fantasy of having a harem of beautiful women," Oothoon's advocacy of free love also serves as a masquerade for "the sexually gratifying woman . . . imagined as a sexually permissive mother" ("Blake" 213). Although Theotormon fails to act, the next prophecy, *America*, opens with an incestuous rape in which Orc (the son of Los/Urthona) seizes "the panting struggling womb" of his sister "The shadowy daughter of Urthona" (2:3, 1:1). Significantly, the remainder of the poem concerns the struggle to overthrow

a political and paternal tyrant. What Fox, Ostriker and Mellor identify as Oothoon's passivity is, from Webster's perspective, the mother's complicity in submitting to the demands of her son, even if this entails being rescued through the murder of the father.

Once set in motion, however, the dynamic of Blake's sexual fantasy unleashes psychic forces which he struggles to control throughout the remainder of his career. To a large extent, Webster sees this process as the activation of a repetition compulsion in which Blake oscillates between fantasies of incestuous sexual gratification and guilt or anxiety over excessive oral greed, the father's murder and the potential retaliation of both parents. Taking the early opposition between Lilly and Pestilence as an example, Webster argues that Blake becomes caught in the "self-perpetuating" conflict generated by this "ambivalent double image" of the female. Sexual greed for the Lilly produces guilt and the punishment of Pestilence which requires the Lilly's return as a defense, compensation and, ultimately, domestication or confinement of imagined female murderousness. As Webster maintains, "Blake's efforts to create an ideally satisfying figure have to be continually renewed," resulting in the creation of such female configurations as Ololon and Jerusalem. Likewise, the "paradoxically smiling Pestilence develops in later poems into a series of wicked females whose smiles promise love but proffer death" ("Blake" 212). Hence we have the figures of Enitharmon, Leutha, Vala, Rahab and Tirzah. These representatives of the Female Will often appear in conjunction with Urizen as a vengeful father figure, and must ultimately be restrained through incorporation into Beulah or reabsorption and subordination (in)to a collective male deity.

The decade from 1796-1807 sees Blake persist in writing *The Four Zoas* as a transitional work which Webster anlayzes into two distinct yet interrelated parts: a mythic-dramatic core and a more abstract Christianizing of the myth.

Originally given the title of *Vala*, the core is a chthonic eruption of sexual energy generating such fantasy figures as a "seductive but murderous phallic female and a feminized or hermaphroditic man" (*Psychology* 203). Here Blake becomes more angry and fearful, creating a series of predominantly negative female figures who collectively destroy men's bodies, unweave them on their looms, drain them in sex and appropriate their penises ("Blake" 219). In this sense, the feminized man alluded to by Webster does not complete an androgynous vision of mutual sexual equality but is instead a castrated victim of female dominance and retribution. Moreover, one is introduced to these sado-masochistic fantasies through the text's accompanying illustrations, which are perhaps more transparent and revealing of Blake's preoedipal preoccupations.[13] Taken together, the written and visual texts convey a sense of horror at the prospect of trying to meet primordial, incestuous needs. Webster argues that this raw, psychic material proves too overwhelming for Blake, leading him to revise it extensively and defensively.

Webster's analysis of Blake's female figure improves considerably upon the explorations of the critics already discussed. In their own ways, both Fox and Ostriker discuss the transition in Blake's configuration of the female from that of a threat which can potentially overstep its proper limits to a redefinition of these limits capable of neutralizing the dangerous female. Fox, like Greco, foregrounds the negative implications for the female of Blake's early poetry in which she is not only limited but limiting. Escape from this delimited space makes her even more sinister and requires the strenuous efforts of the late prophecies to recapture her. Ostriker differs from Fox in that she sees Blake as actively, if only for a time, promoting and championing the female's escape. For Ostriker, the change in Blake's attitude towards the female also charts an ideological transition from revolutionary to reactionary in which he does not differ significantly from Wordsworth or Coleridge. Webster argrees with the general outline of this shift

but improves upon the others by giving a persuasive argument for the psychosexual subtext of this change in which she explains what was only earlier suggested. Her analysis, however, is reductive in ways which shall be discussed in more detail below. It can be said to demote the text itself in favour of psycho-biography. Nevertheless, she includes, in her explanation, a rationale for the Christianizing of Blake's myth. That the others do not deal with this phenomenon at all is strange, considering the probability that one who reads *Milton* and *Jerusalem* for the first time must be struck by the positive appearance of an ideology either omitted or ridiculed in the earlier Lambeth prophecies. Blake's repetitive oscillation between nurturing and phallic mothers and the Oedipal dynamics of inter-male rivalry represents an imaginative dead end for which the only solution is to "lessen the female's power or to transfer it to the male." The first he accomplishes through the creation of Beulah while the second becomes the precondition of Edenic existence. Both these innovations are introduced in *The Four Zoas* under a "Christian framework" that gives evidence of a "strong internal reason for [Blake's] shift from revolutionary to radical Christian," a framework in which Christ is used "to help him control his imagined women and his impulses" ("Blake" 220). Although Webster alludes to Blake's "radical" Christianity, she also describes this shift as a more reactionary turn in that he "repudiates the incestuous act at the heart of his concept of liberated sex and describes it as the original sin and cause of the Fall" ("Blake" 223). Hence psychoanalysis becomes, for Webster, "a useful tool for clarifying religious values" both in their repressive, Urizenic character and more subtle, yet equally repressive, apocalyptic and visionary form ("Blake" 207).

While constituting a significant advance in recent explorations concerning Blake's female figure(s), Webster's psychoanalytic approach is hampered by its presupposition that the text is a symptom to be diagnosed by the critic as

therapist. The tone and style of her interpretation betray the fact that she is uncritically caught up in the transference situation wherein the critic is the subject presumed to know. Her stance reflects that of the analyst whose technique makes it possible to assume a position of mastery over the latent contents of an analysand's unconscious. In its most mechanical and reductive form, this procedure is that employed by the symbol-hunter who routinely uncovers Freudian structures in any given literary text.

Another critic who has no qualms about doing this kind of criticism is Margaret Storch, cited by Webster in a note as someone "whose psychoanalytic approach resembles" her own ("Blake" 353). Storch repeatedly reminds us that Blake's female figure is a symptom of actual intrapsychic conflicts originating in real childhood experiences which we can piece together retroactively with the help of his text. For Storch "art organizes and resolves the scattered images of the unconscious mind," revealing "the total self of the artist." As far as Blake's depiction of women is concerned, these images arise "from the deeper sources of his being" and consist of "personal and partly unconscious feelings about women." Blake's texts are thus "determined by the material of his own psyche" whose roots "lie in the tensions of his early family life" and are expressed through the "paradigm of the cruel parents, or mother alone" about whom he "never stopped talking" (221-25). Ultimately, for Storch, there is an "intense anxiety" in Blake's work revealing "a conflict in the child-mother relationship" (242). "The mother against whom Blake feels such rage" (237) becomes the focus of Blake's Female Will as a sinister, composite "maternal figure," the target of his "hostility," "resentment," and "aggression" (230). Finally, the prevalence of such "destructive feelings" in all likelihood "points to actual and specific harshness on the part of the parents" (234).

While agreeing with Webster and Storch on the psycho-sexual nature of the conflicted female character in Blake, the present study interprets this conflict in the context of recent developments in psychoanalytic literary criticism and in particular the work of Julia Kristeva. In order to understand the use of Kristeva, a preliminary discussion is needed explaining how a pragmatic feminism appropriates Freudian psychoanalysis in the context of its own Lacanian reinterpretation. One can argue that Kristeva's approach to language and literature presupposes this feminist appropriation of Freud. Once the moves from Freud to Lacan and from Lacan to Kristeva are articulated, we will be in a position to understand better the implications they have for how we read poetry in a psychoanalytic context. Rather than focussing on an individual poet's psycho-biography as a foundation for his text, we shall focus on the text itself as a site of linguistic and socio-cultural conflict. What this means, as far as Blake is concerned, is that his marginalization of the female is a feature of his text's ability to mediate and reproduce broad patriarchal cultural structures and metaphors. Likewise, conflicts defining maternal figures in his text exemplify conflicts found in all poetry, music and art which destabilize these cultural hierarchies and are not features of his personal intrapsychic turmoil.

Psychoanalysis and Blake: One Feminist Perspective

The beginning of this discussion concerns Freud's codification of gender identity as a universal and ahistorical binary structure elevating the masculine over and above the feminine. Using the conceptual synthesis of the spectrum of different critical influences provided by Chris Weedon, one can argue that Kristeva presupposes a feminist revision of this traditional Freudian stance. Weedon's unique perspective incorporates such diverse theorists as Cixous, Lacan and

Foucault, providing us with a useful intellectual road map through at least one region of an exceedingly complex ideological terrain. Although time and space do not allow for a detailed discussion of how she engages each of these theorists, a discussion of her conclusions and the general trend of her argument can help us position Kristeva with respect to Blake.

By following the path opened up by Weedon, it becomes possible for us to understand Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory as an instrument of cultural and political criticism. Although Kristeva does not explicitly foreground cultural issues, they are implicit in her work and can be highlighted by the context Weedon provides. Consequently Weedon's discussion assists us in reading Kristeva's theory of the semiotic as a critique of the gender-coded binary established by Freudian orthodoxy. Rather than valorize the paternal position of power within psycho-sexual development, Kristeva privileges the incestuous dynamics traditionally associated with the mother during the preoedipal phase. Although Kristeva does not explicitly discuss incest, it is implicit in her focus on certain kinds of drive. Her notion of the semiotic is in part generated through preoedipal contact with the mother and enters language through a process of oralization revolving around the child's relationship to the mother's breast. The anal-sadistic drives of the semiotic are thus fused from their inception with incestuous contact with the mother. Ultimately these drives enter cultural productions and subject positions established within a patriarchal order to deconstruct the gender-coded binary structure supporting them.

In order to understand the usefulness of Freud to gender theory, despite what seems his biological essentialism, one must first have a sense of how Freud's theory on the acquisition of gender is itself subject to conflicting interpretations. Although fixed heterosexuality is, for Freud, the normal endpoint of psycho-sexual development, its origins are located in a phase characterized by a profound lack of

any kind of stable sexual identity. Lasting through the first eighteen months of life, this phase is marked by the free play of drives which are innate, sadistic, incestuous and bisexual. It is during this period that the child does not yet have a specific gender identity and can make a variety of object choices, becoming 'polymorphously perverse'. Yet once the castration complex sets in, the child learns to reject sexual possession of the mother and restructure its desire in normatively heterosexual ways.

Threatened by the possibility of castration, young boys identify with the father while incorporating familial and social values which enable them to choose sanctioned substitutes for the mother they must reject. Lacking a penis, young girls reject the mother as the one who failed to nurture its development and consequently transfer their desire to the father in the hope of bearing a male child who will substitute for this lack. Accordingly, gender identity hinges on whether or not one has a penis, the possession of which invests the holder with the power inherent in the paternal position. Boys inherit this position while girls do not. Moreover, female lack inhibits the development of a strong superego through identification with the father. Hence a girl not only lacks cultural power but also displays several negative character traits stemming from a weak ethical foundation in the superego. These include jealousy, a weak sense of justice, lack of moral fortitude and impaired rationality.

When one considers Freud's narrative of psycho-sexual development in its entirety, it is easy to see how feminists might have a vexed relationship to it. On the one hand, infant sexuality is initially neither feminine nor masculine but is sadistic, bisexual and incestuous. Although gender identity is gradually constructed through the repression of these "socially taboo desires," they nevertheless continue to function as the unconscious which "constantly seek[s] to disrupt conscious life" (Weedon 46). At this point in Freud's theory, there is a

break with biological determinism since early infant sexuality ignores the question of whether or not the child possesses a penis. Moreover, once gender identity is established and comes to rest on anatomical difference, the repressed sexuality of the unconscious is still in a position to return and destabilize this arrangement. By seizing on the precarious nature of gender constructs, one foregrounds the possibility that gender identity *is* a construct and thus also open to other more progressive reconstructions. On the other hand, Freud's theory does ultimately describe a process which attributes meaning to visible anatomical sexual difference, valorizing possession of the penis over and above its lack. More to the point, by relying on biological determinations as a guarantee of psycho-sexual difference (and female inferiority) Freud also claims that this process is transcultural and ahistorical. Hence the anatomical and ethical inferiority of women is something which this aspect of Freudian theory does not admit as being open to change. From a feminist perspective, then, one could say that there is a contradiction in Freud between notions of gender identity as something which is precarious and open to change, and something which is anatomically specific and permanent.

With Lacanian psychoanalysis it becomes possible to loosen the transcultural and ahistorical hold of the castration complex. Lacan advances a theory in which gender identity is primarily a construct produced in and by language. He thus suggests the possibility of a conceptual turn in which gender identity becomes viewed as a cultural and social construct. Although Lacan himself does not make this turn he potentially opens the way for others to do so. Two of these interpreters are J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis whose thoughts on the castration complex appear below in the context of their impact on Lacanian concepts.

As we have seen, the linchpin in Freud's theory of psycho-sexual development is the castration complex, as that which differentiates the sexes.

Moreover, it is important to remember that the castration complex, as a primal fantasy, is an imagined scenario built into the child as part of its "hereditary [and] genetic transmission" (Laplanche 333). According to Freud, castration was actually carried out by the father in the archaic human past and gradually became phylogenetically transmitted as a presubjective narrative structure inherent within the child. In this sense, one might say that the castration complex comprises a kind of psychic fiction or synthetic *a priori* category which is biologically determined and found in all children due to their common evolutionary inheritance. Hence, when a child discovers the anatomical difference between boys and girls, the castration complex is activated as an interpretation capable of providing a solution to this major enigma. With Lacan, however, the "castration complex has to be understood in terms of a cultural order, where the right to a particular practice is invariably associated with a prohibition" (Laplanche 59). In other words, the castration complex is now understood exclusively as a cultural Law which prohibits incest and articulates or imposes this prohibition through a network of linguistic and social exchanges. In order for us to become fully individuated, speaking and gendered subjects, we must find our place in these networks and do so at the cost of primal incestuous pleasures. Known collectively as the symbolic order, these networks are defined either by their linguistic or kinship structures. Linguistically, the symbolic order uses the symbol to mediate the castration complex. Just as the castration complex cuts us off from the mother to provide us with substitutes for her, the symbol separates us from the immediacy of experience by acting as a substitute for it. Likewise, the kinship structures of the family prohibit incest and define the limits within which we may choose sanctioned substitutes for the mother. Moreover, these socio-cultural and linguistic symbolisms impose themselves with their structures as orders which constitute the psyche of the child in its entirety.

According to A. Lemaire, in one of the earliest and most valuable commentaries on Lacan, these structures impact upon the child and create the mental topography of conscious, preconscious and unconscious levels through an act of primal repression (of incest). These vertical levels of the mind are also homologous with the levels of phonemes, monemes, words and phrases discovered by structural linguistics (2-3). Also, just as structural linguistics discovers the operations of metaphor and metonymy governing the transformation of elements from one level to another, Lacan observes the primary processes of condensation and displacement at work distributing psychic elements and charges from one level of Freud's topography to another. Hence not only is the child's conscious gender identity a linguistic and socio-cultural construct but so too is his or her unconscious mind, along with the relations and forces that govern the constitution of its elements. Finally the fundamentally linguistic and cultural construction of all mental and psychic processes has several consequences for those interested in psychoanalytic literary criticism in general and its more specific feminist orientations.

The traditional psychoanalytic approach to poetry, adopted by such critics as Webster and Storch, understands it as nothing more than the symptomatic transcription of an individual poet's personal neurosis. In this case, the only possible approach is a biographical one which, by the same token loses sight of the complexities of an individual poet's language and instead creates a stereotypical simplification, reducing the poet to his manias, neuroses and failures (Felman 127). By treating the poem as symptom, such criticism always points to something beyond language as its ground, referent or signified. After Lacan, however, one can no longer assume that language functions as a secondary and derivative expression of intrapsychic conflict but, instead, must locate such conflict primarily within language itself. The earlier psychoanalytic model, in distinguishing

between language (symptom) and mind, also distinguished between the outside and the inside, making the outside dependent upon the inside. The psychosexual dynamics inhabiting a text could always be explained through recourse to a mental cause. Yet for Lacan, the inside/outside distinction collapses, so that language is always already inside as the fundamental structure of the mind. Simply put, there no longer is any distinction between psychosexual and linguistic processes. Consequently, one can no longer assume that psychic conflict is an occulted process, happening deep within a subject, which subsequently gets reported at some temporal and spatial distance from its occurrence. The main methodological difference that this makes for criticism is that we no longer look for psychoanalytic processes *in* the text but instead discover them *as* the text or *through* it (Felman 138-39). The kind of psychoanalytic criticism facilitated by Lacan does not seek to ferret out a work's hidden or latent content. Rather, the critic focuses upon the 'superficial' surface of the text in order to trace the displacements, repetitions, substitutions and conflicts which occur *there* (Felman 140). Hidden meanings are eschewed since there no longer is an opposition between surface and depth. All that remains is the exposed materiality of the text and its various transformations. One can say that in making the biographical approach to psychoanalytic criticism irrelevant, such a methodology is an analysis of the signifier as opposed to the signified (Felman 140).

Taking its lead from these more recent developments in psychoanalytic criticism, my approach to Blake differs from Webster's in not making the same kind of reductive assumptions about the nature of language. Whatever psychoanalytic conflicts emerge *as* Blake's text, they are first and foremost linguistic dynamics which do not need to be traced beyond their own functioning. Yet my approach to Blake is also influenced by Kristeva and her participation in a feminist rewriting of Freud which can be seen as articulating the political

unconscious of Lacan's return to Freud. Her particular appropriation of psychoanalysis combines it with the task of social criticism in a way which Freud and Lacan ignore. In order to do this, however, Kristeva must first presuppose the way in which feminism includes psychoanalysis, as both an instrument for and an object of cultural critique. As mentioned, by focusing on the Law as a cultural interdiction, one can revise what for Freud is a tendency inherent within the child to develop a gender identity in ways which are biologically determined and independent of historical experience. By making the castration complex a cultural phenomenon, one raises the issue of the cultural and historical specificity of gender inequality. Rather than constituting a biological given, it may be the construction of certain ideologically motivated, institutional and social practices. Furthermore, some feminists have used these insights, provided by Lacanian thought, to criticise both Freud and Lacan as contributing to the creation of institutions and practices which marginalize and repress women. In a sense, Lacanian psychoanalysis has provided the conceptual equipment to criticize psychoanalysis itself as part of a patriarchal culture which may be vulnerable to change.[14] One way to rethink this culture is to revise psychoanalysis, shifting its conceptual center of gravity away from the father, the Law and the castration complex. Using the insights of psychoanalysis, one can reconstitute it by valorizing the mother's body and the psychosexual processes it activates in the child. Once this new operational base is established, theorists such as Kristeva use it in order to destabilize other aspects of patriarchal culture. While Lacan makes it possible for us to understand how language, poetry, art and other cultural productions are inherently psychic, Kristeva shows us how this psychic dynamic is also actively subversive. By concentrating on the revolutionary potential of the unconscious, Kristeva discovers its operations in all cultural products, collectively at work undermining the psychic foundations of patriarchal capitalism. In what follows below, we shall see how

feminism can be construed as revising psychoanalysis, how Kristeva uses this revision and what this means for a reading of Blake.

Under Lacan's influence, such feminists as Cixous and Irigaray have looked closely at the ideological and discursive formations which have shaped gender relations throughout the history of Western civilization and its metaphysical tradition. Typical of this conjunction between psychoanalysis, feminism and materialism is the work of Chris Weedon. Weedon borrows the notion of a discursive formation from Foucault, who defines it as a set of relations established between "institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification [and] modes of characterization . . . " (*Archaeology* 45). As a network governed by rules, these relations establish what something is in terms of how it can be *known* : what one can say about it, how these statements are to be made, who can make them, how these statements are to be gathered within disciplines and institutions and finally, what can or should be done with the object thus defined and contextualized. For Foucault, discourses are not only ways of thinking and producing knowledge or meaning within "a discipline possessing a scientific status and scientific pretentions" (*Archaeology* 179). The statements and practices comprising a discipline such as medicine or psychiatry are always already interimplicated by statements and practices from other disciplines such as religion, philosophy, jurisprudence and literature. Moreover, this interactive field of fluid relations is further enriched by political decisions, "statements made and opinions expressed in daily life," and economic factors such as market conditions, the "norms of industrial labour and bourgeois morality" (*Archaeology* 179). Finally this fluctuating and complex exchange of concepts and practices is given a concrete existence through such institutions as hospitals, schools, prisons, asylums, the church, the army and the family. Not only does discourse find a base in the

organizational structure of these institutions but it can also express itself through the architecture which houses it.

According to Foucault, the body is the object which discourse defines and captures in its network of relations. Economic developments surrounding the acceleration of bourgeois capitalism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made it necessary to obtain "productive service from individuals in their concrete lives" (*Foucault* 66). Consequently it became essential to "gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behaviour" in order to "undertake the administration, control, and direction of the accumulation of men" (*Foucault* 66-67). Because of this need to mobilize an entire population for the sake of production, the discursive formation alluded to above coalesced for the first time in its classic form to deal with "problems of demography, public health, hygiene, housing conditions, longevity and fertility" (*Foucault* 67). Not only must the body be scientifically known but this knowledge must be employed to ensure the body's usefulness and durability as a "work tool," while also providing for its future resupply through population control (*Archaeology* 163). Thus it became necessary to "rationalize medicine on the basis of the other sciences," creating what we now take for granted as the social welfare system (*Archaeology* 163).

As a "more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations" this system exercised power insofar as it was able to dictate how the body could be disciplined, manipulated and confined (Foucault, *Power* 198). Foucault argues that the body, as the object of knowledge within this discursive formation, also became the "target of power" (*Foucault* 180). Finally the issue of the body's sexuality took on specific importance because of its economic usefulness for the reproduction of labour capacity. Within the unit of the married couple, the woman as wife and *mother* became the focus for medico-social discursive

formations concerned with child-bearing, breast-feeding and maladjusted forms of sexuality (such as masturbation and hysteria) that threatened her proper reproductive role. Women were thus given a biologico-moral responsibility to their children which functionally confined them within the family space.

Consequently, femininity is itself articulated by a discursive production, defining its nature within a context of patriarchal subjection which excludes women from most aspects of public life and social power. Such institutional practices as the law, medicine, social welfare, education and the organization of the family and work collectively constitute knowledge in the form of social practices, defining the meaning of a woman's body, her psychic energy, emotions, desire and conscious subjectivity. Female subjectivity can thus be understood as a social construct produced through various discursive practices which are historically and culturally specific.

Equipped with Foucault's critical apparatus, Weedon fuses it with Lacan's own observations in order to assert that the castration complex and its derivative gender relations are not only cultural in origin, but are also actively produced and circulated through the social practices of such institutions as psychiatry. Psychoanalysis is itself a discursive formation contributing to the social marginalization and exploitation of women. One can argue that "the apparent phallocentrism of psychoanalysis is descriptive of the state of [patriarchal] society" and that psychoanalysis functions as "a useful conceptual framework for understanding the [patriarchal] construction of human sexuality" (57). Yet Freud's claim to provide us with a universal theory inscribes gender inequality as a permanent feature of society, closed off from the historical dynamics of conflict and change. Even Lacan's reliance on the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss concedes a universal status to the castration complex, as the founding principle of every society, in spite of its exclusive cultural and lingustic constitution.

Consequently, a major feminist line of response to patriarchal psychoanalysis has been to historicize it as an institutional discipline, recognizing that it is itself part of the culture it presumes to describe. Given this view, such concepts as the castration complex and the central role of the father as the guarantor of human identity and socialization become open to question as culture-specific formations, and also become subject to change.

Before moving on to what a materialist feminism might see as a possible alternative to patriarchal psychoanalysis, more can be said on the structure of the culture this discursive practice supports. Although discourses invariably have strong institutional bases organizing the social practices of everyday life, it is important to remember that these relationships of knowledge and power are inextricably linked to narratives and fictions about the nature of the subjectivity caught up in these practices and relations. Hence, while certain social institutions marginalize women in relationships where only men have power, psychoanalysis, *as a theory*, promotes the fiction of female anatomical and ethical inferiority. In this sense both aspects of discourse are governed by 'bipolar' relations of power and powerlessness in which men are valorized as the superior term over and against an inferior female element. In the view of such feminists as Hélène Cixous, what is at work here is the cultural dominance of a single metaphor expressing itself through both institutional and theoretical discursive formations:

Man
Woman

> Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organized . . . Thought has always worked through opposition . . . Through dual, hierarchical oppositions. Superior/Inferior . . . Everywhere (where ordering intervenes, where a law organizes what is thinkable by oppositions) . . . Theory of culture, theory of

> society, symbolic systems in general--art, religion, family, language--it is all developed while bringing the same schemes to light . . . A universal battlefield.
>
> (63-64)

Taking her lead from deconstruction, Cixous refers to such an order as a phallocentrism since there is a "solidarity between logocentrism and phallocentrism" in which both seek the "stability of the masculine structure" built upon the foundation of a "hot-shot little phallic rock" (65, 74). Moreover, phallocentrism, is a "[l]ogocentrism subject[ing] . . . all concepts, codes and values--to a binary system, related to 'the' couple man/woman . . . [in which] . . . [o]rganization by hierarchy makes all conceptual organization subject to man" and his phallically guaranteed position of power (64). As far as Cixous is concerned, the entire history of Western thought and social organization is dominated by this single, gender-coded metaphor even though it may articulate itself through a variety of incarnations including those of activity/passivity, head/heart, logos/pathos, form/matter, culture/nature and father/mother. Insofar as one is a participant in Western culture, s/he is marked by this metaphor in a way that is structurally homologous with the symbolic's formation of psychic life in accordance with the paternal metaphor of the Law. In both cases we are dealing with discursive formations which are culturally specific and shape subjectivity according to a blueprint of metaphors elevating the "male" over and above the "female." Hence, within the context of such a phallocentric blueprint, "masculine" and "feminine" become cultural metaphors articulating a variety of oppositions and repressions, including those of class between capital and labour and the social dynamics between men and women. Read psychoanalytically, these gender-marked oppositions also define a symbolic order in which the father, as agent of castration, interdicts the incestuous prerogatives of the child in relation to

the mother. Once again, it is important to remember that "father" and "mother" are sociocultural metaphors through which to understand the process of our assimilation into society, both in terms of kinship structures and language. Hence, "castration" becomes a figurative way of talking about rigidly defined social roles, while "incest" becomes a term reserved for infractions against them, including outright revolution. The preoccupation of the symbolic with clear delineation, rigid demarcation and hierarchy can also be found in the structure of language. Syntax, grammatical distinctions between subject and object, and unequivocal meaning or denotation become linguistic expressions of "castration" while grammatical infractions and polysemy become representations of "incest."

Attention has already been drawn to the way a particular feminist orientation can seek to revise psychoanalysis by historicizing it and resituating it around the mother. This constitutes the creation of a reverse discourse within the discipline of psychoanalysis itself. For Foucault, discourses do not simply articulate static, bipolar relations of power and powerlessness. They inscribe themselves in a field of relations which are often in conflict with each other. Moreover, the field of relations also includes social institutions like psychoanalysis as sites of discursive conflict over how subjectivities and social relations should be constituted and social control exercised. In this sense, social power and authority do not always come from a secure institutional location. For example, the very subject position of powerlessness which a discourse creates can be used as an operational base from which to produce new, resistant discourses. Hence, within the discourse of psychoanalysis, a feminist can focus on preoedipal, incestuous relations within the mother-child dyad rather than on the more orthodox Freudian orientation around the Oedipal triangle (mother-child-father). Originally repressed and marginalized by the castration complex and by the priority of the father, the mother is now given an important role in the development of a more

subversive type of subjectivity. This valorization of the mother and the unconscious, where incestuous drives have been repressed, emphasizes and promotes the precariousness of consciousness as defined by unequal gender positions. Rather than accept the dominant cultural fiction of a patriarchal, phallocentric narrative, this move seeks to rewrite all of the old, binary metaphors in a new, maternal register.

Kristeva's own work participates in this fundamental restructuring. Although sociocultural and linguistic structures are predominantly phallocentric, symbolic and hierarchical, Kristeva identifies and focuses primarily on those forces which continuously work to undermine and subvert these rigidities. Specifically, any breach in these overlapping structures is a by-product of what she calls the semiotic: a preoedipal and anal-sadistic dynamic activated through the incestuous exchanges between mother and child, giving rise to conflicted and oscillating rhythms of sexual energy. Although it is preoedipal and prelinguistic, the semiotic is still inscribed with marks from the symbolic which it receives through the mediation of the mother's body. In other words, by caring for the child's physical needs for food and hygiene, the mother contributes to the child's self-image as a cohesive, unified body which will later take its place as a gender-specific speaking-subject in social and linguistic networks of exchange. At the same time, however, she also helps the child discover the sexuality of its own erogenous zones and the sadistic drive motility of both anal and oral sphincters. Moreover, it is the force of these sadistic drives which continuously shatters the child's body-image while the image repeatedly seeks to re-establish itself. It is this conflict which characterizes the semiotic. Gradually, under pressure of social prohibitions against incest, the child stabilizes its identity by repressing this preoedipal conflict. Nevertheless, the force of sadistic drives continuously erupts and disrupts the syntactic delineations of the symbolic, producing further conflict through the

cultural productions of music, art and poetry. As a return of the repressed semiotic, these activities pulverize clear oppositions by introducing conflict, rhythm, dissonance and colour into structures which seek to remain uncomplicated, clean, monotonous and monochromatic.

Kristeva may rely extensively on the details of psychoanalytic theory, yet she does not use it exclusively for purposes of individual analysis but also employs its concepts for the sake of a cultural critique. This she accomplishes in a number of ways. Her entire theoretical and critical enterprise constitutes a reverse discourse at odds with the dominant discourse of patriarchal psychoanalysis. Moreover, the conflict she discovers within the subject, between the semiotic and the symbolic, is one which perpetually fissures subjectivity by placing it always in process and on trial. Although it may look as if she is providing us with categories applicable to a personal psychoanalysis, what she is also doing is undermining our belief in a cohesive, individual subject as one of the major cultural myths of capitalist ideology. Her major contribution to a critique of culture consists in her claim that the conflict between semiotic and symbolic can be found in *all* linguistic and cultural productions. While Lacan makes it possible for us to discover psychoanalytic processes *as* a textual dynamic, Kristeva further specifies the nature of this dynamic as one of perpetual conflict between the opposing metaphors of our culture. Hence, she argues that cultural productions everywhere pit "mother" against "father," "feminine" against "masculine," and implicitly, "incest" against "castration" as a way of destabilizing the hierarchical structure of those patriarchal discursive formations which organize our society. Left to itself, phallocentrism assumes that its "masculine" elements are securely positioned over and above the "feminine." Yet activities like music, art and poetry continually place these binary elements in conflict with each other to the point where their relationship becomes undecidable. Finally, one cannot overemphasize the fact that

this conflict between semiotic and symbolic exhibits itself as the constitutional dynamic of various linguistic, musical and artistic practices. As a student of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kristeva argues that psycho-sexual dynamics can be observed *as* these various practices without recourse to reductive, biographical interpretations. Even though these practices exist within a phallocentric discourse and, in part, owe their existence to its dominant metaphors, they also circulate countervailing rhythms which make them part of a collective reverse discourse.

Webster's analysis treats Blake's text as a symptom of his own personal psychological conflicts and implicitly privileges biography at the expense of textual and cultural criticism. For her, Blake's conflicted attitude towards the female expresses his own intrapsychic conflict between incest and its prohibition in which the passively good female becomes an incestuously permissive mother while her actively evil counterpart is a castrating phallic mother and representative of the superego. Ultimately, the only way that Blake can resolve this conflict is by privileging an exclusively male realm of the imagination (Eden) while either absorbing the female into it (hence her elimination) or exiling females to their own exclusive, prison-like ghetto (Beulah). Rather than read these textual dynamics as symptomatic expressions of Blake's own nervous malady, one can read his binary opposition between the masculine and the feminine as a cultural expression of his own participation in the dominant phallocentric discourse of the West. Hence in creating the dualism between a masculine Human Form Divine and the Female Will, Blake coins his own version of the patriarchal and hierarchical metaphors defining Western tradition.

As phallocentric, Western civilization is defined by a psychoanalytic subtext reproducing itself through various metaphors which repeat masculine phallic supremacy over and above feminine lack. While one aspect of Blake's work is assimilated by this phallocentric or symbolic order, the unique nature of local

conflicts at certain places in his visual art and poetry disrupts his efforts at maintaining clear delineation and hierarchy. As other critics have observed, Blake seeks to valorize the masculine while marginalizing the feminine and especially those conflicts which surround her. Kristeva makes it possible for us to read this textual dynamic as the symbolic's attempt to repress the characteristic conflicts of the semiotic. Yet there are places in Blake's work where the semiotic erupts with a force that pulverizes the stability of his central bipolar hierarchy.

In the case of Blake's aesthetic theory, his particular brand of Romantic neoclassicism valorizes the purity of watercolour and strong, unbroken delineation of the masculine form over and above the broken lines and painterly style of Flemish and Venetian artists. Although he does not specifically use gender metaphors to identify the rejected practices of Rembrandt or Correggio, Blake's aesthetic binaries can still be analyzed as belonging to a phallocentric tradition. What makes this possible is his characterization of Venetian and Flemish art as excrement. Blake's use of scatalogical figures, in relation to these marginalized aesthetic practices, can be connected with another concept of Kristeva's which is structurally homologous with the maternal and incestuous semiotic. Known as abjection, this theoretical formation is defined psychoanalytically in terms of a phobic's response to such discharges as vomit, menstrual blood, urine and excrement. At first, these discharges symbolize the incestuously permissive mother from which the patient recoils in disgust and horror under pressure of the castration complex. Yet the patient is also fascinated and drawn towards this horror as s/he begins to recognize his or her own incestuous desire and accept substitutions for it within socially sanctioned limits. Hence, although the maternal abject is rejected and repressed like the semiotic, the pleasure inherent within anal sadistic rejection continues to exert its own counterpressure. This is, again, much like the semiotic breach of the symbolic order which, nevertheless, does not

completely overturn it. Finally, it is my contention that Blake treats Venetian and Flemish art as a kind of abjection and consequently participates in a phallocentric order by marginalizing the mother in this excremental form.

Blake's aesthetics are marked by conflicts homologous with those characterizing phallocentrism and the semiotic conflicts it seeks to repress. On the one hand, his artistic efforts strive to create clearly delineated human (i.e. masculine) forms while marginalizing painterly (i.e. feminine) effects. Yet in his efforts to marginalize an excremental practice, Blake reduces his work to the same abject conditions. Judging by what he says about this uncanny dynamic in his "Descriptive Catalogue," he is himself possessed and overcome by the contaminating influence of Rembrandt and Correggio in the very process of trying to deny and repress them. In other words, the semiotic explodes in an excess of affect, producing a discharge of energy in the form of this structural conflict. As a local event in his aesthetic theory and practice, this paradoxical blurring of outline with indiscriminate shadow subverts the hierarchical, gender-coded structure Blake seeks to erect.

As far as Blake's poetry is concerned, *The Four Zoas*, in its appearance on the page, reproduces the same difficulty encountered by him in his art. Blake becomes so obsessed by the challenge of producing exemplary artworks of clear delineation that his repeated efforts at revision also muddy and ruin them. Likewise, Blake's obsessive and extensive revisions of *The Four Zoas* force him to abandon the manuscript's original fine copper-plate script for a plain hand. At the same time, his revisions produce a manuscript so complex that it defies all definitive assertions about meaningful physical groupings or chronologically definable layers of composition or inscription. The growing confusion of the manuscript, together with Blake's reversion to a plain hand, suggest that his efforts to perfect the poem only serve further to undermine themselves. As with

his art, the end result is another muddied text incapable of the delineation and outline exhibited by his other finished, engraved and illuminated works. Once again, it appears that he becomes possessed by an excess of semiotic affect.

The highly complicated text of *The Four Zoas* exhibits many of the tensions also found in Blake's visual art. Specifically, these conflicts revolve around a series of motifs originally identified by Donald Ault in *Narrative Unbound*. Of particular importance is the feast motif which is predominant in Night I as a dialectic of dismemberment between the male Zoas, Tharmas and Los, and their female Emanations, Enion and Enitharmon. Psychoanalysis makes it possible for us to identify this motif as a fantasy which simultaneously depicts the child's incestuous and sadistic oral incorporation of the mother's breast as well as the mother's retaliatory castration of the child. Unlike Webster, the present study finds that these dynamics occur simultaneously and are not located at some spatial and temporal distance from each other in the text. As a version of the preoedipal semiotic, this conflict is initially repressed by Urizen's construction of the Mundane Shell in Night II as a configuration of the symbolic order. Nevertheless, the semiotic reasserts itself by Night IX when, as representations of a gender-coded opposition, Tharmas and Enion become reunited in an undecidable fashion under Vala's maternal supervision.

The following discussion of Blake's aesthetic theory and *The Four Zoas* takes its lead from the observations of such critics as Fox, Ostriker, Mellor, Greco and Webster while shifting their terms of reference within the theoretical context provided by recent developments in psychoanalytic criticism. Their general observation that Blake's text is structured along the lines of a binary opposition between a privileged, masculine Human Form Divine and a marginalized Female Will remains fundamentally correct. Equally useful is their analysis of the feminine into the stereotypes of passively good and actively evil configurations and

Webster's more specific recognition that these articulations are psycho-sexually marked. The present discussion however, tries to avoid biographical reductionism and to read Blake's sexual/textual dynamic as a symptom of his participation in the prevailing patriarchal system of the West. As phallocentric, the metaphors governing this cultural structure reproduce the gender inequality described and, in part, prescribed by orthodox Freudian (and Lacanian) psychoanalysis. Also, while the critics in question see the splitting of the female as complicit with Blake's subordination of the feminine, I read this conflict as an inadvertent, subversive and potentially liberating dynamic. As Greco and Webster have observed, Blake's conflicts surrounding the female figure focus on the mother and specifically deal with incest and its prohibitions. With the help of Kristeva, it becomes possible to read this conflict as a semiotic dynamic or manifestation of abjection capable of pulverizing Blake's main, gender-coded hierarchy. Blake may unwittingly employ a paternalistic metaphor of repression in order to articulate his ostensibly revolutionary program. Yet the conflicts which initially appear to be part of this repression may also point the way to the discovery of homologous conflicts that undermine it.

Both Blake's artistic and poetic practices are constituted as sites of conflict between the symbolic order and its semiotic disruptions. In articulating this conflict, they mobilize some of the central gender-coded metaphors of phallocentric discursive formations including those oppositions of male/female and pure/impure. As a psycho-sexually charged conflict, its participating metaphors are also marked by the opposition between castration and incest. Indeed it is arguable that incest is a cultural metaphor central not only to Blake's work but also to that of other major Romantic poets. Moreover, when these writers include incest as a figure in their work, they are not concerned with recording their personal psychic development but use it as a metaphor for wider cultural and political issues. In

other words, incest once again appears as part of a reverse discourse attempting to subvert the dominant hierarchies of the age, an admittedly conflicted metaphor for the revolutionary political movements of the period.

Incest as a Political and Revolutionary Metaphor

A materialist feminism contextualizes incest as a cultural and revolutionary metaphor and also situates Kristevan theory so that it is possible to discover incestuous conflict at work in other cultural productions. Kristeva's theory potentially recognizes the destabilizing eruption of semiotic conflict in any work of literature, art or music from any period. Yet there are circumstances peculiar to Blake's poetry, and to Romanticism in general, which call for the application of Kristeva's type of feminist psychoanalytic criticism. Furthermore, Romanticism, like the feminist re-writing of psychoanalysis, uses incest as a catalyst in the overturning of culture-specific social restrictions masquerading as transcendental and ahistorical laws. In what follows the cultural and historical context of Romanticism shall be described in a way which legitimizes the application of Kristeva to Blake.

During the eighteenth century, German, French and English writers are intrigued by the motif of unwitting sibling incest. The most frequent plot structure for this motif has two young people fall in love and perhaps get married and have children, only to discover that they are in fact a brother and sister who have been raised separately. One can find this motif in almost thirty works including von Lohenstein's *Arminius*, Dryden's *Don Sebastian*, Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*, Voltaire's *Mahomet* and Schiller's *Bride of Messina* (Wilson 249). W. D. Wilson suggests that these works raise the issue of incest

prohibition as part of a broader eighteenth-century debate on its status as either a cultural convention, meant to be set aside in favour of true feeling, or a natural law meant to be strictly observed. After a brief survey, Wilson concludes that these authors often simultaneously endorse both sides of the debate in a single work. They are either unwilling or unable to support either position unequivocally in a debate whose terms of reference anticipate a similar crux in twentieth-century psychoanalysis. One can find parallels between eighteenth-century positions on the prohibition of incest and the positions within psychoanalysis as to whether or not the castration complex is a biologically determined, universal and ahistorical injunction or is culturally and historically determined. Specifically, the prevailing opinion among eighteenth-century thinkers also anticipates implications drawn from Lacanian arguments on behalf of the prohibition of incest as cultural in origin. Moreover, some of the scientific and philosophical arguments of the eighteenth century which support the cultural specificity of incest are quite explicit when advocating sibling incest as a justifiable breach of a superstitious and irrational prohibition having no foundation in natural law. In some cases, these arguments become thinly veiled political assaults upon the legitimacy of feudal regimes which can no longer justify their existence through appeals to natural law or divine right. Just as the incest prohibition is an arbitrary restriction placed upon the natural dictates of the heart, so too are the religious and political myths propping up the tyranny of feudal aristocracies without fixed transcendental status. In both cases, these prohibitions and myths should be shattered and society restructured according to more 'natural' principles. Consequently, as early as the eighteenth century, theorists and writers are already considering the question of incest and its prohibition as a politically charged metaphor. One can also claim that these theorists anticipate feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis in that both argue for the cultural specificity of the incest prohibition

(i.e. castration complex) and its vulnerability to change. More to the point, both approaches to incest appreciate it as a metaphor of socio-cultural and political revolution. In this sense, Kristeva's implicit use of incest as an artistic and politically subversive dynamic has its historical origins in the thought of the eighteenth century.

Even though pre-Romantic writers of the eighteenth century were slow to pick up on this aspect of the philosophical/scientific position, their Romantic successors were, in some cases, quick to take advantage of incest and its potential as a politically subversive trope. Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* and Blake's *America a Prophecy* are perhaps the best examples of this correlation between sibling incest and political revolution. One can also find incest as revolutionary metaphor in other works by Blake such as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Of all the Romantic poets, these two are perhaps most emphatic in their use of incest while subscribing to the culture-specific view of it developed in the preceding century.

In Blake, however, there are contradictions between his use of incest as a revolutionary metaphor and the repressive, phallocentric condition this revolution is meant to inaugurate. Within the context of Blake's overall system, sexual excess and its associated revolutionary dynamics are viewed as the preliminary stages in the growth of a fully active and engaged imagination. At its apocalyptic pitch, this process includes the mind's absorption of a hitherto external natural world. Moreover, this final stage of redeemed imagination is figured in terms of the androgyne with all of its associated connotations of male domination. Hence Blake overturns the postion of the father only to restore it. In spite of this contradiction, however, Blake's use of incest as a revolutionary figure resurfaces even within the repressive, final condition of the Human Form Divine. Even though Blake begins by using incest as an uncomplicated metaphor of revolution in ways which appear more definitive than eighteenth-century attempts, he

eventually lapses back into the equivocations of the preceding age. Blake's text, however, performs an additional move which further subverts even this apparent phallocentric tenacity.

The eighteenth-century debate is polarized around the issue of whether the prohibition of incest is cultural or natural. The natural/biological side of the argument foregrounds the deleterious effects of inbreeding as leading to a wide range of defects in offspring. Although this prohibition differs from the orthodox Freudian one, it nevertheless reproduces the biological determinism inherent in Freud's views on the castration complex. Yet without a knowledge of genetics such a suspicion, in the eighteenth century, can only be regarded as a superstition (Wilson 251). Consequently, one finds "an amazingly uniform opinion . . . that incest taboos cannot be strongly justified by *jus naturae*" (Wilson 252). For the anthropologists of that century, however, there is evidence which suggests that incest is largely permitted in primitive societies and is only prevented for certain cultural reasons. Their arguments include a version of the alliance theory in which the avoidance of incest strengthens the cultural and economic status of the family through the exchange of wives. They also include the desire to avoid generational conflict within the family and the resulting disorganization of this most crucial institution of social regulation (Wilson 250). Such writers as Mandeville conclude that incest prohibitions are a function of custom and not of nature. Likewise, Lord Bolingbroke argues that parent-offspring incest is prohibited by social and political anxieties about the confusion of roles within the family. Yet Bolingbroke also distinguishes between varieties of incest, claiming that sibling incest cannot be prohibited even on these cultural grounds. Other theorists, however, such as the Orientalist and theologian Johann David Michaelis, argue that the only effective cultural restriction to sibling incest is the mutual indifference of brother and sister based on daily contact and exposure to each other's faults. Yet even this

culturally sustained taboo can be easily broken if the siblings have been separated at birth and raised as strangers to each other; hence the contrived plots of some eighteenth-century novels.

For the eighteenth century then, the taboo regarding sibling incest is an example "of a powerful social sanction with no immediately apparent justification" (Wilson 251). The critique of incest thus becomes a vehicle for attacking other powerful social sanctions that legitimize themselves on the presumed basis of natural law. Moreover, unwitting sibling incest is the best way to expose the arbitrary nature of the taboo's injunction. While cultural reasons such as confusion between generations and social disorganization can still be mustered in defence of the prohibition against parent-offspring incest, even these prohibitions lose their force once unwitting sibling incest removes them and the contempt bred by familiarity. Sibling incest becomes the most vulnerable chink in the ideological armour of both church and state. Through sibling incest, writers begin to demystify and deconstruct the universal and transcendental status of other social laws and institutions by reinserting these institutional signifieds into the historical flux of signifiers which originally generated them. As Wilson observes, "the theme of unwitting incest could take on a philosophical and even theological significance that would have been impossible otherwise" (256). The conflict over incest thus becomes a metaphor of the conflict between a free and innocent, spontaneous individual and a repressive state apparatus:

> it almost seems as if many of the authors consciously manipulated these issues in order to construct a paradigmatic, explosive confrontation between social mores and individual expression--and in this case rationality appeared to support the individual's expression.
>
> (Wilson 255)

Peter Thorslev agrees with Wilson in his assessment of incest as a political metaphor yet broadens the discussion by including Romantic depictions of this motif. While eighteenth-century writers dwell on incest as unwitting, the Romantics confer a "special significance" upon this transgression because it is "committed in full consciousness, is even premeditated, and thus its symbolic implications can be much more fully developed" (46). Thorslev distinguishes between three types of consciously-committed incest which he later collapses into two politically-charged metaphors: father-daughter and mother-son incest. The first is "universally condemned in Romantic literature" and is "made to symbolize the tyranny of traditional authority" (47-48). In *The Cenci* Shelley uses the shock value of this motif to criticize the arbitrary violence of a patriarchal socio-political order in which "fathers, authorities, institutions and traditions" attempt to "grotesquely . . . renew their youth by devouring their young or by reproducing upon them" (47).

Shelley uses the rape of Beatrice by her father, Count Cenci, to indict three agents of paternal power in his critique: The Count, the Pope and God. Beatrice clearly condemns Cenci as one member of this patriarchal triumvirate when she observes that "tyranny, and impious hate/ Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair" (1.3.100-101). Yet her appeal for mercy from a God "Whose image upon earth a father is" (2.1.16-17) also ironically names the heavenly father as a partner in paternal tyranny. Cenci himself confirms his confederacy with God through his surmise that the "world's Father/ Must grant a parent's prayer against his child" (4.1.106-107). After Beatrice has Cenci murdered, the Pope enlists himself in this unholy alliance when he refuses to pardon Beatrice on the grounds that Cenci's murder, if left unpunished, would legitimize wide-spread subversive activity:

> Parricide grows so rife
> That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
> Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
> Authority, and power, and hoary hair
> Are grown crimes capital.
>
> (5.4.20-24)

Hence Shelley's victimized heroine "abjures all of her temporal and spiritual fathers as being equally cruel and unjust" and calls into question the authority of those institutions which they represent (the family, the state and the church) (Thorslev 48).

Barbara Groseclose supports Thorslev's argument that the play's paternal figures represent a "duplicitous social order" in which Cenci serves as the "domestic agent of a patriarchal despotism ruling Church and State" (229). Groseclose goes on to interpret Beatrice's retaliatory murder of her father within the same political/metaphorical context. Specifically, if Cenci's incestuous rape "is a symbol of tyrannical oppression, then the parricide must represent the possibility of eliminating tyranny through violence" (230). This subversive side to parricide is hinted at by Cenci when he curses Beatrice as "A *rebel* to her father and her God" (4.1.90; emphasis added). As a metaphor of revolution, parricide also suggests a different kind of incest. Even though it is a daughter who plots the murder of her father, Cenci's death points to an Oedipal subtext especially since Beatrice, in part, acts to avenge the murder of her brothers by the Count. Cenci's own reference to his "disobedient and rebellious sons" (1.3.43) strengthens this possibility as does his accusation that Lucretia, his wife, has taught another son "Parricide with his alphabet" (2.1.132). Consequently one finds textual evidence to support the suggestion of Oedipal strife and the subtle possibility that incest of a different kind can be used as a political metaphor, albeit a subversive one.

While father-daughter incest "can be made to symbolize the tyranny of traditional authority" the remaining two types of consciously-committed incest can be said collectively to comprise "a drama of revolution." For Thorslev, the stepmother-stepson incest theme has some of the same possibilities as the brother-sister incest theme since the father-stepmother marriage is often a January-May affair, making the stepmother and stepson more nearly of an age (48). Hence, the one theme of sibling incest becomes a major Romantic metaphor of transgression in which established social, legal and moral codes are simultaneously broken.

The openness and conscious justification of the Romantic hero's incestuous love, as compared to the eighteenth-century hero's relative blindness, may have more to do with different approaches to the psychology of human relationships than with anything else. As mentioned earlier, eighteenth-century theorists believed that long-term, close cohabitation between brothers and sisters would kill any possibility of eroticism due to their mutual familiarity with each other's faults. Yet according to Alan Richardson, the Romantics are influenced more by a pervasive period belief in psychological principles best articulated by the associationist theory of David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749). Hence siblings exposed to the same empirical environment of impressions and associations are for all intents and purposes "joined by the closest possible ties of sympathy" ("Dangers" 741). Consequently an eighteenth-century writer can only manufacture desire between sibling characters in a book by first separating them so that their mutual estrangement will later, upon contact, breed mutual affections. On the other hand, a Romantic writer can only develop the possibilities within sibling incest by creating an erotic connection or "sympathy" between a brother and sister who have lived with each other for a long period of time, and thus also know their relationship to each other.

Byron's *Cain* and Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* can be cited as examples of this tendency towards consciously-committed sibling incest. Like other thinkers of the eighteenth century and Romanticism, Byron historicizes the incest taboo. He specifically raises the issue through Cain's sister-wife Adah and her conversation with Lucifer who predicts the sinful deviance of sibling-incest for future generations. In disbelief, Adah responds with a series of questions which she goes on to answer in a way which is politically relevant:

> What is the sin which is not
> Sin in itself? Can circumstance make sin
> Or virtue? – if it doth, we are . . . slaves. . . .
>
> (1.1.380-382)

In this one brief passage Byron presupposes a long tradition arguing against the naturalness of the incest taboo and its use by tyrants to legitimize themselves on the basis of its supposed transcendence. What is in fact natural is the love shared between brother and sister which achieves its most complete expression as a sexual relation. The incest which Adah takes for granted has its origins in the womb which generated Cain and herself as physical and, implicitly, emotional twins. Thus Adah has always assumed that her children will also marry each other based upon their common ancestry and an environment of love created within one and the same family unit:

> Shall they not love and bring forth things that love
> Out of their love? have they not drawn their milk
> Out of this bosom? was not he, their father,
> Born of the same sole womb, in the same hour
> With me? did we not love each other? and

In multiplying our being multiply
Things which will love each other as we love
Them?

(1.1.368-375)

Shelley's preface to *Laon and Cythna* provides us with an indication of how iconoclastic and propagandistic his poem really is:

> In the personal conduct of my Hero and Heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life [i.e. sibling incest]. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings [i.e. love], and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention.
>
> (*Complete* 247)

His use of sibling-incest between Laon and Cythna to shake the foundations of established institutions presupposes the kind of sympathy which exists between Cain and Adah as the result of long exposure to each other and close association during childhood. In the twenty stanzas of Canto VI (23-42) which depict their incestuous union, Shelley includes two passages emphasizing how the shared childhood of siblings must incubate a sexual passion. The episode is narrated by Laon who foregrounds

the youthful years
Which [they] together past, their hopes and fears,
The common blood which ran within [their] frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, [their] very names,
And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims. . . .

(6.31.274-79)

Along with environmental features building bonds of affection Shelley also lists the biological component of "common blood" which is also implicitly an aspect of the relationship between Cain and Adah. In both cases this appears to be an adaptation of the 'voice of blood' motif from the eighteenth century in which siblings possess "an ability to recognize or to sense intuitively consanguinity without having been acquainted . . . " (Wilson 255). Rather than acting in an unconscious manner, the 'voice of blood' now reinforces other elements causing siblings to be attracted to one another. Once this milieu of mutual influence finds a voice in "mute and liquid ecstacies" (6.33.295), Laon defends the "wide and wild oblivion" (6.35.311) enjoyed by Cythna and himself as a natural act which convention seeks to repress:

> And such is Nature's modesty, that those
> Who grow together cannot choose but love,
> If faith or custom do not interpose,
> Or common slavery mar what else might move
> All gentlest thought. . . .
>
> (6.40.352-56)

Hence in both Byron and Shelley sibling-incest is the innocent expression of affections developed over many years of co-habitation in conjunction with other biological factors. It is a function of natural law to support this act rather than prohibit it on the basis of tyrannies seeking their own transcendental justifications.

This analysis of *Laon and Cythna*, and Wilson's observations on the eighteenth-century context concerning incest, are underscored and elaborated by John Donovan. Donovan concurs with Wilson when citing the analysis of several writers, including Mandeville, Bolingbroke, Gibbon and Bentham, that the restriction and supression of "sexual contact between brothers and sisters [is] fundamentally [a] matter . . . of mode and custom" (72). He also extends Wilson's

survey of the historical and cultural context by including a review of conservative and reactionary opinion on the issue of incest. Although there is considerable philosophical weight supporting the view of incest prohibition as only a matter of convention, there is also a strong ideological foundation supporting the opposing viewpoint that it is a social sanction inextricably linked to the ahistorical permanence of Biblical codes. As an example, Donovan cites William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) which articulates "the received opinion that the Biblical and ecclesiastical prohibition of sexual love between brother and sister accords with the law of nature" (71). Wilson's article concentrates on the body of opinion which attacks this position while also providing certain social and cultural reasons for restricting some forms of incest. Donovan, however, adds to our understanding of the period by describing a tradition which defends incest prohibition as a permanent and fixed sanction authorized by more than just superstition. Although the deleterious effects of inbreeding could not be used to prohibit incest on biological grounds, there is still a considerable discourse supporting the view that its prohibition is stipulated by religious and natural law. While Wilson seems to ignore this discourse, Donovan includes it as the conservative bulwark against which more subversive aspects of enlightened thought must struggle.

As further evidence of this dominant discourse, Donovan surveys the arguments of several nineteenth-century periodicals that published articles attacking the appearance of incest in the work of some Romantic poets. Collectively, such periodicals as the *Quarterly Review*, the *Eclectic Review*, the *British Review*, *The Monitor*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwoods* and others can be taken as a discursive formation against which the Romantic use of incest might be cast as a reverse discourse. An example of how this discursive formation elaborates the values of a conservative political agenda can be found in the

criticism greeting the appearance of several poems prior to the publication of *Laon and Cythna* (December 1817) in which incest is also a principal theme. Although Byron's *Parsina* (1816) and *Manfred* (1817) as well as Hunt's *The Story of Rimini* all deal with sexual transgression, they do not directly confront the issue of consciously-committed sibling incest nor violate its prohibition as flagrantly as Shelley. Byron's *Manfred* "suggests that a sexual passion has existed in the past between the protagonist and his (now dead) sister without explicitly affirming their sin" (61). Hunt's *Rimini* also "deals with the love between a man and his brother's wife" while Byron's *Parsina* concerns a relationship between "an illegitimate son and his father's legal wife" (60). Strictly speaking, these works do not deal with incest, yet the affinity between the various partners is judged as being the same as consanguinity as far as Paley is concerned. Consequently the various degrees of censure, criticism and attack directed at these poems by the above periodicals gives us some idea of the establishment view concerning incest and its representation. This critical response also provides us with an example of the kind of pressure which could force a publisher or poet into censoring himself rather than risk a charge of blasphemous libel, prosecution by the government and conviction. Hence Charles Ollier, as the publisher of *Laon and Cythna*, felt constrained to ask Shelley for revisions based on the reception of Hunt's and Byron's poems and on the "tense political atmosphere of early December 1817 when one prosecution for publishing blasphemous libels had recently ended in a conviction and another was pending" (50). In this sense, Shelley's eventual compliance with Ollier's request constitutes a "compromise with stringent political and commercial conditions" by an artist who does what is necessary to get into print and "find readers at a given historical moment" (56). Yet the sheer vehemence of actual conservative opinions and prosecutions, plus the coercive weight of their real or anticipated pressure, can be used as an index of how volatile

and subversive incest can be as a metaphor of social revolution. In a word, the potential power of incest as a destabilizing metaphor is directly proportional to the degree of reaction it generates.

In this context, *Blackwood's* attack on Hunt is perhaps the best example of "politico-literary vituperation for its formation of the conservative case." In articles "On the Cockney School of Poetry" Hunt is chosen as a "composite figure" and representative of a school of poetry with conspicuous republican political affiliations (64). The assumptions of the conservative position threatened by Hunt's treatment of incest are powerfully brought out by Donovan. Hunt is criticized for his "lack of any true religious sentiment or patriotic attachment," the implication being that the incest taboo lies at the juncture of religious and political authority. At a time of renewed agitation in England for political reform, Hunt's figuration of incest rekindles memories of the French Revolution's assault on both the church and monarchy. Consequently Hunt is criticized on aesthetic grounds for abusing a more "orthodox literary tradition of dealing with the incest-theme" which reinforces, rather than subverts, patriarchal authority (65). As far as *Blackwoods* is concerned, incest can only be used to provoke the reality of divine intervention depicted as the "absolute nature of religious mystery . . . divorced from human will" (66-67). Incest can only be represented in art if it is summarily punished by an act of divine intervention meant to maintain the purity of family relations. Divine retribution thus acts on behalf of a transcendental moral code by defending social institutions set up as its terrestrial representatives. Morever, both the code and its derivative institutions are one with the "inscrutable fact[s] of moral life . . . accepted . . . without question" as being beyond human intervention (66). In this manner, the aesthetically appropriate punishment of incest simultaneously reconfirms the transcendental permanence of conservative religious and political *status quos.*

Donovan's discussion of the *Blackwoods* articles foregrounds their assumption that Hunt's transgression lies in his refusal to "recognize the mysterious nature of incest" and instead locate its "springs . . . not in some inexplicable divine intervention . . . but in human desire itself." In other words, incest does not contradict a divine injunction but is simply an expression of natural human affections which conventional social institutions seek to repress. Incest confronts an array of social sanctions as "a dilemma of natural human desire in conflict with political [not divine] authority" (67). Once bereft of their transcendental foundation these religious, social and political institutions are vulnerable to revolutionary transformation. This possibility is also feared by Hunt's reviewers for whom the secularization of the incest prohibition marks "the final and inevitable descent into moral chaos which follows from the refusal to recognize the interdependent authority of law and religion" (68). By the autumn of 1817 the cultural atmosphere is charged by the critical response to Hunt's mobilization of the incest-theme as related to his support for liberal causes and his notoriously critical views of religion. It is this plus other judicial proceedings which explains

> Charles Ollier's unwillingness to publish *Laon and Cythna* unless the incest were removed as well as the anti-religious passages softened, for in a poem of radical tenor celebrating 'such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in a European nation' these elements might well attract at least the sort of attack on mingled moral, political and religious grounds which had been made on Hunt.
>
> (69)

Shelley's use of the incest motif in *Laon and Cythna* is more sophisticated and direct than Hunt's deployment of it. Rather than partially skirt the issue by representing a form of incest which is not literally consanguineous, Shelley in fact

makes his revolutionaries brother and sister. While admittedly using undisguised sibling incest for its shock value, Shelley also employs it as a "controlling symbol" in ways which are more complex than its use as a figure challenging the presumed permanence of autocratic religious and political structures (57). In addition to using incest as an "analogue within the individual of revolutionary activity in the public sphere," Shelley also uses it to promote a "correspondence between an enlightened sexual morality and radical political improvement" (57, 74). He accomplishes this by characterizing sibling incest as a paradigmatic type of perfect human relationship which, according to Donovan, employs a notion of sympathy that is a "foundation-concept of eighteenth-century moral theory." Based on this theory, there is "a tendency of the entire [human] being to discover what is congenial [which] produces a movement outwards from the self that leads to shared feelings and ultimately results in the social virtues [having their] origin in the primitive attraction of like for like" (80). Hence the metaphor of sibling incest expresses an "intricate and extended sympathy" or love in its purest form as a force capable of forming a true social communion of individuals held together by innate affections for each other and not by the tyranny of superimposed, artificial conventions. Sibling incest may be patriarchy's most vulnerable pressure point yet it also functions as a model of the love which should govern society. Thus Shelley uses it to suggest a configuration "of generous social ideals" that ground a true political community while simultaneously shattering the outworn conventions of an autocratic state (81).

Alan Richardson agrees with Donovan's assessment of sympathy as a foundation-concept of the eighteenth century yet goes on to discuss some of the more sinister implications of its use by Romanticism within the context of sibling incest. Like Donovan, Richardson argues that the Romantics are interested in "expressions of sympathy . . . directed towards nature, as in 'Home at Grasmere'

and Keats' ode 'To Autumn,' or towards all mankind, as in *Prometheus Unbound* and the closing lines of *The Prelude*" ("Dangers" 754). These utopian sentiments are implicitly political when motivated by a vision of a harmonious world order; yet Richardson uncovers a kind of "spiritual imperialism" with respect to the feminine, when Romantic poets use sympathy as a value to advance their otherwise progressive agenda ("Dangers" 751). This exploitation of the feminine takes place through the motif of sibling incest which still retains its status as political metaphor but becomes more complicated, problematic and self-contradictory. As far as Richardson is concerned, sibling-incest is still used by the Romantics as a metaphor of personal and social transformation; yet this change is not only facilitated through an assault on patriarchy but is also executed through another kind of appropriation of the feminine. Hence Richardson observes that "the identification of a brother and sister who mirror one another and are unified in a charged . . . erotic relation serves to transfer, as it were, feminine characteristics to the male protagonist" ("Dangers" 747). Through this vampirism, the sister's feminine qualities of gentleness, compassion and wise passiveness are incorporated and introjected by the brother.

Perhaps the best example of this kind of incestuous vampirism can be found in Byron's *Manfred*. Manfred is haunted by guilt over having committed an unspeakable crime involving an apparent act of incest with his sister, Astarte, and her destruction as a result of his literally all-consuming passion for her. As siblings, Manfred and his sister have "loved each other as [they] should not love" (2.1.27). Like other sibling couples they are virtual mirror reflections of each other. Astarte is thus described by Manfred as his physical and psychological double:

She was like me in lineaments - her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But softn'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe. . . .

(2.2.105-111)

Moreover, both Manfred and Astarte once heard the 'voice of blood' drawing them closer together since the blood which ran in their father's veins also circulated through their own when they "were in [their] youth, and had one heart" (2.1.26). While possessing many of the characteristics defining sibling incest for the Romantics, Manfred and Astarte also develop their relationship to include the latter's destruction. Sympathy and identification get taken to the extreme of actual physical incorporation. Hence there are hints of cannibalism in Manfred's "fatal" embrace of his sister (2.1.88). When offered a cup of wine by the chamois hunter, Manfred rejects it with the outcry that "there's blood upon the brim" (2.1.21). His unquenchable guilt causes him to hallucinate his sister's blood in the cup with the additional suggestion of vampirism. The idea that Manfred has sucked his sister dry is also present in his claim to have broken her heart and "withered" it (2.2.119). Finally Manfred's incest and necromancy are symptoms of his daring pride and noble stature elevating him as a self-exile above the common run of humanity. Disdaining "to mingle with/ a herd" (3.1.121-122) he remains an outlaw and uses incest as part of a quest propelling him into a region of knowledge beyond all ethical polar oppositions. Yet his quest for a proto-existentialist freedom paradoxically entails the predatory assimilation of the feminine.

The inherent contradiction in sibling-incest between sympathetic end and predatory means is not the only conflict problematizing this figure. The second major contradiction lies in the fact that the Romantics use sibling-incest as a figure to promote global sympathy while simultaneously alienating their incestuous protagonists from the rest of society. Incest consequently becomes a metaphor of both perfect sympathy and social alienation. It is thus "a radically anti-social union, which divides the couple from the larger community." Hence Manfred's "efforts to become truly sympathetic perversely result in a sense of lasting alienation from the rest of mankind" ("Dangers" 751). Likewise, Laon and Cythna are seized by reactionary forces after the revolution and immolated on a pyre for their political/sexual transgressions. Based on these observations, Richardson concludes that there is conflict within the Romantic poet himself: "The Romantic poet is drawn to mingle the two kinds of love [sibling and erotic] by a fascination with the power of sympathy, but that power is broken by the unconscious horror of incest, and the fascination turns to guilt or revulsion" ("Dangers" 744). His analysis concludes that no matter how radical these poets may be in consciously using sibling-incest as a metaphor for a utopian world ruled by sympathy, their poetry still exhibits the tenacious survival of the incest taboo and its punitive force:

> The same emotional intensity that facilitates the union of brother and sister betrays them into a violation of the primary social law, and the inevitable intrusion of death--society's revenge--destroys either one or both siblings. Intentions unfortunately count for nothing, and the pursuit of a wider sympathy results in an exclusive and doomed relationship.
>
> ("Dangers" 753-54)

The foregoing discussion attempts to build a cultural context in which to situate Blake's own work and his use of the incest motif as a cultural metaphor.

Blake uses sibling-incest in *America: A Prophecy* as a metaphor of revolution and, in doing so, appears to fit into the cultural analysis provided for us by the above critics in which this kind of incest becomes a means of attacking patriarchal ideology. In the 'Preludium' to *America* Orc rapes the "shadowy daughter of Urthona". Within the context of Blake's overall myth, both Orc and this female are the progeny of Los/Urthona, making them brother and sister. Hence Orc as "Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of God's law" (7:6) not only "scatter[s] religion abroad" (8:5) but also makes it possible to declare that "Empire is no more" (6:15). Even though the sibling connection is not foregrounded as strongly as it is in *Laon and Cythna*, it is still implictly there and used as a metaphor of rebellion. Finally, this veiled use of sibling-incest as a revolutionary figure suggests that Blake is perhaps familiar with the eighteenth-century debate over the status of the incest taboo and the way in which the incest motif can be used to challenge repressive patriarchal ideologies.

Moreover, Blake's use of sibling-incest in *America* displays some of the other characteristics discussed by critics as being typical of this motif. One of these is the tendency of a male sibling to drink in feminine substance from his sister. The "shadowy daughter of Urthona" fits this pattern through her behaviour as a nurturer to Orc (1:1). Initially she is a poor provider who brings Orc "His food . . . in iron baskets, [and] his drink in cups of iron" (1:3). Her use of iron utensils suggests sexual frustration since they are materially related to the "*tenfold* chains" which bind Orc as a version of the fact that his sexual "fiery joy . . . [is] perverted to *ten* commands" by a repressive Urizenic religious code (1:12, 8:3; emphasis added). Being bound, Orc must endure "despairing love . . . strong as jealousy," a condition which also hints at his possible involvement in an Oedipal struggle with a more powerful sexual rival (2:1). Yet once Orc manages to "rend the links [and] free . . . the wrists of fire" he seizes his sister's "panting struggling

womb" and rapes her in an act causing the release of her "virgin cry": "O what limb rending pains I feel. thy fire & my frost/ Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent" (2:2-3, 6, 15-16). Orc inseminates his sister's "furrows" and is in a position to incorporate her as a more generous source of nourishment. This oral sadism is enacted by Orc through one of the animal symbols which come to represent him. At one point during his sexual bondage, Orc describes himself as a whale lashing the "raging fathomless abyss" (1:15). Once free, however, he is described by his sister as a "Whale in the South-sea, *drinking* [her] soul away" (2:14; emphasis added). The vampirism inherent in this act of sibling-incest is just as destructive as that enacted by Manfred. Hence the "nameless female" is torn apart by "limb rending pains," is dissolved like "frost" when exposed to Orc's sexual "fire" and is blasted into gaping "furrows" by his phallic "lightnings."

Her violent consumption and dismemberment by Orc also anticipates the predatory interaction between Zoas and their Emanations from Night I of *The Four Zoas*. In the context of this epic's inaugural violence, dismemberment becomes part of a preoedipal fantasy in which the child's relationship to the mother's breast is interpreted as tearing it apart, scooping it out or drinking it up. Because the action in *America* and *The Four Zoas* is so similar, one could infer that the sibling-incest of the former is also charged with the mother-son incest of the latter. There are in fact details within the text of *America* reinforcing the identity between these two kinds of incest. At one point during her virgin cry, Orc's sister identifies herself as a topographical site of conflict: "On *my* American plains I feel the struggling afflictions" (2:10; emphasis added). In one sense she becomes an object to be fought over by American patriots and the representatives of English imperialism known in the poem as Albion's Angel and the Guardian Prince of Albion. Yet the poem's subtext makes this a sexual struggle as well. Thus Washington observes

a heavy chain

Descend link by link from Albions cliffs across the sea to bind

Brothers & sons of America. . . .

(3:7-9)

Although these lines most obviously express political repression, the significance of chain imagery in the poem also transforms them into an account of sexual repression. Moreover, the repression of "Brothers & sons" by a pair of paternalistic tyrants suggests that the conflict taking place over America is also an attempt to interdict both sibling and mother-son incest.

There are also other passages in the poem describing the oral sadism of Oedipal rivalry and mother-son incest. At one point Orc is identified by Albion's Angel as one who "Stands at the gate of Enitharmon to devour her children" (7:4). Albion's Angel alludes to Orc's birth in Night V of *The Four Zoas* where he bursts from Enitharmon's heart although, in this version, the portal of birth is her vaginal "gate." The Oedipal strife from Night V, between Orc and Los, is transposed onto this scene in *America* where its dynamics are reversed. Orc is put into the position of the father and behaves even more sadistically than Los in Night V who merely binds Orc without actually feasting upon him. Yet no sooner is Orc cast as a paternal tyrant than he becomes the "Devourer of [his] parent" (9:20). Hence Albion's Angel narrates a passage in which Orc turns his oral sadism against both his mother and father:

Ah terrible birth! a young one bursting! where is the weeping mouth?

And where the mother's milk? instead those ever-hissing jaws

And parched lips drop with fresh gore; now roll thou in the clouds

Thy mother lays her length outstretch'd upon the shore beneath.

(9:22-25)

The Angel's questions suggest paternal interdiction of the child's incestuous relation to the mother's breast. Frustrated by this separation from the mother, Orc's thirsty "weeping mouth" becomes transformed and overheated with rage. He implicitly attacks his father as the one responsible for his hunger while the gore which sizzles on his mouth also belongs to his mother who lies prone on the ground in a posture which is sexually receptive and simultaneously corpse-like. Orc's cannibalistic attack sexually penetrates the mother as a source of nourishment, while also punishing her with death for her withdrawal of food and pleasure.

Once again incest incorporates the object at the object's expense. In one sense the oral incorporation of both Orc's sister and mother conforms to the pattern discussed by Richardson as a process of sexual imperialism. If this is the case, then Orc is a tyrant when behaving as an orally-sadistic father and an equally sadistic rebellious son. In this last instance he is engaged in a paradoxical enterprise, using incest as a liberating force while simultaneously performing acts of sexual colonization. Orc is thus caught up in a pattern which potentially problematizes all versions of incest which take possession of the mother/sister while dethroning a paternal tyrant. Intended as a liberating gesture, such a manoeuvre appears to replace one despot with another. Consequently the motif of female incorporation distinguishing Romantic sibling-incest, which Blake repeats as a function of Orc's liberation, anticipates Freud's primal horde of brothers as they usurp their father's place to possess their female kin. In Kristevan terms the symbolic order is disrupted by a semiotic which seems to reinscribe phallocentrism while simultaneously erasing it. Although this appears to be a phallic perversion of the semiotic Kristeva unambiguously includes this kind of possessiveness as one of its features while it erupts, through oralization, into the symbolic. For Kristeva, the anal-sadistic drive motility of the semiotic invades the symbolic through an erotization of speech originating in the child's aggressive union with

the mother's body. The sadistic energy of such a "devouring fusion" also cathects the oral rejection of the mother's body in such a way that the expulsion of words eventually comes to receive a similar charge (*Revolution* 153). The infant's incestuous oral sadism is displaced onto language. Hence

> Suction or expulsion, fusion with or rejection of the mother's breast seem to be at the root of this erotization of the vocal apparatus and, through it, the introduction into the linguistic order of an excess of pleasure marked by a redistribution of the phonematic order, morphological structure, and even syntax . . .
>
> (*Revolution* 154)

This complicity between the semiotic and sadistic, preoedipal sexuality will be discussed in more detail in chapter three with respect to the influence of Melanie Klein on Kristeva. For the present one need only focus on the orally-sadistic nature of incest for Blake which not only anticipates Kristeva but also reflects the sexual imperialism of the age. Richardson's argument (below on page) thus allows us to identify Blake's composite metaphor of incest with a general Romantic trend linking incestuous colonization of the female with a preoedipal mother-child dyad.

Returning to the issue of Blake's historical context, there are also other passages in his work which suggest that he is familiar with eighteenth-century arguments claiming that divine injunctions, such as the incest taboo, are in reality man-made conventions. Although there is no evidence that Blake read Mandeville, Bolingbroke, Gibbon or Bentham, there is evidence supporting the view that his "association with a 'remarkable coterie' of English Jacobins at Joseph Johnson's weekly dinners is not . . . a will-o'-the-wisp" (Erdman, *Prophet* 155). Consequently he could have come into contact with the ideas of such revolutionary thinkers as William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Tom Paine, and through

them, could have learned about debates over the status of moral or political codes. For example, Blake's annotations to *An Apology for the Bible* (1797) consistently defend Tom Paine from attacks made by the book's author R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff. They also presuppose a familiarity with Paine's ideas since Blake, at one point, accuses Landaff of "Dishonest Misrepresentation" (E 612). Moreover, some of Blake's opinions, as contained in the annotations, correspond with Paine's ideas in *The Age of Reason*, which is also the target of Landaff's criticisms. Specifically, Paine argues that all religious codes and institutions are "human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit . . . by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals" (Paine 6-7). Consequently the "commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them" and like the story of Christ's supernatural origin, have "every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it" (Paine 8, 11). As is the case with other eighteenth-century iconoclasts, Paine articulates the case against the divine status of moral injunctions while citing their secular origins. Likewise, Blake supports Paine's argument that religious codes are really social conventions which legitimize their repressive functions behind a supernatural mask:

> The laws of the Jews were . . . the basest & most oppressive of human codes. & being like all other codes given *under pretence of divine command* were what Christ pronounced them The Abomination that maketh desolate i.e. *State Religion* which . . . is the Source of all Cruelty.
>
> (E 618; emphasis added)

Also like Paine, Blake sees how the supernatural claims of the Bible's defenders can be used as a ploy to cement worldly power and exploitation. Hence he attacks the wickedness of those who defend the Israelites "in murdering so many thousands under pretence of a command from God" (E 614). Finally Blake, in his own way,

argues that this pretence is circulated by those who have a vested class interest in maintaining state power to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the people:

> the books of the Bible were never believed willingly by any nation & . . . none but designing Villains ever pretended to believe [them] [.] [*T*]*he Bible is all a State Trick*, thro which tho' the People at all times could see they never had. *the power to throw off*[.] . . . [A]ll the Commentators on the Bible are Dishonest Designing Knaves who *in hopes of a good living* adopt the *State religion*. . . .
>
> (E 616; emphasis added)

Blake makes much the same point on plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in which "Priesthood" is accused of using reason and abstraction to petrify poetic myth into an ideology through which the people are "enslav'd." Once again, Blake attacks religious codes as repressive structures ultimately having their origins in human creativity while concealing this geneaology as part of their pretence to divine status. By claiming that "All deities reside in the human breast," Blake argues for the poet's ability to create and recreate the guiding principles of nature and culture. Hence poets animate "all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses" while placing "each city & country . . . under its mental deity." Yet by "Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales" a class of priests can "abstract the mental deities from their objects" and transform them into a transcendental system beyond the reach of human intervention and creativity. Pronouncing that "the Gods had ordered such things" this class can then proceed to use this system to secure its own power as something which is fixed and eternal. What is in fact a product of human imagination is masked as divine for the sake of worldly domination.

Blake's use of sibling-incest in *America*, as a revolutionary trope, together with his critcism of divine scripture as pretence and fraud, strongly suggests that

he is familiar with the eighteenth-century use of incest to demystify the supernatural claims of conventional moral injunctions. He comes close to imitating the critique made by his contemporaries in *The Marriage*, which not only cites the fraudulence of religious ideologies but also employs an incestuous, revolutionary subtext. Although *The Marriage* does not deal with sibling incest, it nevertheless does correlate Oedipal struggle with revolutionary strife. The complex, dialectical relationship between reason and energy can be read in an Oedipal context in which reason "is the father's weapon" while the sexual energy of excess "is the weapon of the poet-son" (Webster, *Psychology*, 67). Likewise, Blake's agonistic struggle with Milton and Swedenborg for creative priority "is consistent with Harold Bloom's theory of literary Oedipal conflict" (Webster, *Psychology* 68). In this case, Blake can be interpreted as struggling to extricate himself from his dependence upon them since their influence as literary precursors, or fathers within the tradition, potentially suffocates his own creative relationship with the mother as muse.

The Oedipal nature of this textual dynamic does not necessarily deviate from the dominant Romantic tendency towards sibling-incest as a subversive metaphor. Even within the studies discussed above, on the motif of sibling-incest, one finds that the difference between it and mother-son incest is not absolute. At certain points in their discussions of sibling-incest, both Thorslev and Richardson blur this distinction. In a parenthetical aside, Thorslev mentions Otto Rank's opinion that "all cases of brother-sister incest are really sublimations of a son-mother attraction" (46). Richardson also implicitly blurs the distinction between these two kinds of incests when he paraphrases Wordsworth in defence of the thesis that Romantic poets seem to assimilate feminine characteristics. While using sibling-incest as the paradigm for such a transference, Richardson goes on to claim that the appropriated feminine feelings and characteristics are also "the

prerogatives of a 'nursing *mother's* heart'" ("Dangers" 747; emphasis added). Although he concentrates on the dynamic of sympathetic identification between siblings, the vampirism that Richardson documents can be construed as a son sucking in feminine substance from a mother's breast. This incestuous tie to the mother is foregrounded in another article by Richardson on "Romanticism and The Colonization Of The Feminine" in which he uses the psychoanalytic model of the preoedipal oral stage to explain the same kind of emotional transference which he otherwise describes as a dynamic of sibling incest:

> Romantic writers could not simply claim emotional intensity and intuitions as male prerogatives. Instead, where male writers had relegated sympathy and sensibility to their mothers, wives, and sisters, they now sought to reclaim 'feminine' qualities through incorporating something of these same figures. The primary foundation for such fantasies of incorporation was sought in memories and depictions of early infancy, when the (male) child initially includes aspects of the mother, especially the breast, in his developing self-conception. Throughout the pre-oedipal period the boundary between infant and mother remains unstable in the psyche of the child, who moves between 'fusion, separation, and refusion' with the mother, introjecting maternal qualities and achieving a separate identity only gradually and with difficulty.
>
> (15)

Consequently, the above analysis implicitly identifies mother-child incest and sibling-incest in ways which make it possible for us to place the subtextual Oedipal dynamic of *The Marriage* in the tradition of sibling-incest as a revolutionary metaphor.

As the coda to *The Marriage*, 'A Song of Liberty' correlates the Oedipal struggle of the poem's subtext with a revolutionary strife capable of bringing down

repressive, patriarchal regimes. Moreover, the 'Song' is intertextually related to *America* in a way which overdetermines its use of incest as metaphor of revolution, making it simultaneously a function of sibling interaction and the mother-son dyad. The 'Song' begins as the "Eternal Female" groans while giving birth to a howling "new born terror" (25:17) who shares many of Orc's characteristics, especially that of fire. This "new born fire [stands] before the starry king" who is also implicitly "jealous" (25:8,10) of the relationship between mother and son. The "starry king" consequently grabs the son's "flaming hair" with his "hand of jealousy" and hurls "the new born wonder thro' the starry night" (25:8,10), separating him from his mother. Blake's 'Song' thus incorporates elements of mother-son incest, Oedipal rivalry and incest prohibition into its political/revolutionary text. Although the son at first appears defeated, "the jealous king" is immediately depicted as falling down with "grey brow'd councellors, thunderous warriors, curl'd veterans" (25:15) and other representatives of state power. The eventual victory of the son over the father/king has both a political and sexual significance, uniting revolutionary victory with the renewed claims of incest. Hence, even though the king, in defeat, attempts to "promulgate[ ] his ten commands" the son "stamps the stony laws to dust" and declares that "Empire is no more" (27:18,20). In a word, he pulverizes both the father/king's state power and its supporting religious ideology. Likewise, we are also told in *America* that "Empire is no more" (6:15) as Orc takes Urizen's "ten commands" (8:3) and "That stony law . . . stamp[s] to dust" (8:5). Due to these intertextual relations, the revolutionary thrust of sibling-incest from *America* can also be found embedded within 'A Song of Liberty' as a feature of its Oedipal rivalry.

The foregoing discussion suggests that Blake's work intersects a number of cultural, political and sexual motifs current in the eighteenth century and

Romanticism. Like many in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Blake sees religious and moral codes as human fabrications meant to secure autocratic state power. As well, Blake uses sibling-incest and its inherent connections to the mother-child dyad in order to challenge the supernatural claims made by patriarchal ideologies. Although Blake's use of incest as a revolutionary metaphor is perhaps not as explicit as Shelley's, the evidence is there to suggest that he was familiar with eighteenth-century mobilizations of this figure and sought to appropriate it for his own purposes.

Blake's use of incest as a metaphor of revolution consequently calls for the application to his work of the theoretical formations provided by the largely psychoanalytic approach of Julia Kristeva. Like Kristeva and the feminist revision of psychoanalysis presupposed by her, Blake's work also assumes an approach to the prohibition of incest which treats it as a cultural injunction. Moreover, incestuous relations with the mother or a female substitute for her, become incorporated as metaphors in his work due to their revolutionary potency. In much the same way, Kristeva operates from the subversiveness of the maternal position and the preoedipal exchanges of the mother-child dyad. The eruption of these incestuous energies, for Blake, also includes an aggressive and possessive orality akin to Kristeva's description of the semiotic erotization of speech. Finally these eruptions are never unequivocal but continually result in conflicts between incestuous transgression and retaliatory castration, or in Kristevan terms, the semiotic and the symbolic. By seeking to eliminate these conflicts, Blake marginalizes the mother on behalf of his patriarchal metaphor, the Human Form Divine. Ultimately this conflict is a threat, not to Blake's personal peace of mind, but to the phallocentric system which underwrites his text. Kristeva's theory also discusses the threat posed by a homologous conflict to the undisturbed superiority of the symbolic order. Because of these similarities, Kristeva's theoretical

formations are especially suited to an analysis of Blake. In the course of this study, Kristeva's conceptual tools will be used to examine Blake's conflicted maternal figure as a representation of the linguistic and cultural conflicts articulated by her own work. The next section gives one a more detailed understanding of how this equipment functions.

Kristeva's Revolution in Poetic Language

Incest appears in Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* in the guise of the anal sadistic drives which partially constitute the dynamics of what she refers to as the semiotic chora.[15] By privileging these preoedipal relations between the mother's body and the body of the child, Kristeva demonstrates how semiotic forces, activated by this relationship, subvert the syntactical rigidities of language and the patriarchal structures of the state. In doing this, she creates a potent metaphor for revolutionary processes which erupt primarily in the cultural productions of art, music and poetry while also sending shock waves through individuals and the discursive formations which shape their subjectivity. Although Kristeva begins with a discussion of the mother-child dyad, the conceptual terms of her analysis identify the incestuous nature of this relationship as fundamentally linguistic from start to finish. Put bluntly, we are not dealing with sexual exchanges between consanguineous individuals but with the origins of language and the linguistic origins of the subject.

Kristeva's description of the semiotic chora begins with the autoerotic fragmentation of the child's body and with the energies and drives which circulate through these erotogenic zones. Within the context of orthodox Freudian theory, the child discovers its own sexuality as a "fringe benefit (Lustnebengewinn) derived from the operation of the instincts of self-preservation" (Laplanche 31).

Known as anaclisis (Anlehnung), this process assumes that the child's first priority in sucking at the mother's breast is survival, and only in the course of having its nourishment needs met does it discover pleasure. Subsequently, this bonus pleasure becomes detached, independent and sought for its own sake through autoerotic processes. Although the child initially discovers its erotogenic zones as "favoured paths of exchange with the surroundings," they eventually develop into autonomous seats of sexual excitation (Laplanche 155). Rather than seek pleasure through exchanges with its maternal surroundings the child's "sexual excitation . . . is generated and gratified at the same site in the case of each individual erotogenic zone" (Laplanche 46). Consequently the child does not depend on an image of a unified body but exists in a primal, anarchic state defined by the "fragmentation of the sexual instinct" which becomes localized and detached at each independent organ (Laplance 47).

Yet Kristeva's reliance on this Freudian model is reoriented by an equally important dependence upon a Lacanian perspective. While the Freudian dynamic of anaclisis is incestuous in a more literal sense, Kristeva's use of Lacan transfers the proper meaning of these psychosexual processes onto an entirely linguistic register and consequently metaphorizes them. By negotiating this transfer, Kristeva begins to use the incestuous drives of the semiotic as a metaphor of revolutionary eruption in language, culture and society. Furthermore, the linguistic nature of the preoedipal mother-child dyad will also help us clarify how the semiotic is structured as a facilitation and regulation of *jouissance*.

Originally the dyadic linkage and bodily confusion between mother and child creates an aggregate of fragments designated by Lacan and his students as 'letters': a network of sexually charged erotogenic zones.[16] These 'letters' refer to lived bodily experiences of corporeal sensation in which there is a discernible difference between pleasure and unpleasure. The erotogenic zones are not innate in

the child but are created through interaction with the mother as she caresses and plays with the child's body, imprinting marks of *jouissance* upon it. Moreover, these sensory 'letters' are given a sexual value as delimited sites of satisfaction, meaningful as zones of greater or lesser tension. Such zones as mouth, anus and phallus, etc. are defined through a process of differentiation (in tension levels) much as signifiers have value conferred upon them as part of a diacritical system: hence their designation as letters.

The mother-child dyad, however, is not a region of totally uninhibited *jouissance* brought on through incestuous contact. It is also the site of a rhythmic oscillation between a specifically anal-sadistic *jouissance* and attempts to regulate it. Even though this region is preoedipal, and is not yet subject to the full force of paternal interdiction, there is, nevertheless, a constraint imposed upon the body of the child. In short, it is the mother's body which mediates the symbolic law by regulating the anal drives of that particular erotogenic zone. Maternal care begins to police the child's body, especially those orifices which define its determinate and bounding outline by means of what passes through and across those boundaries. Simply put, the anal sadistic pleasure of defecation appears to be experienced by the child as a confirmation of his bodily fragmentation, while the mother's efforts to maintain a *clean* and proper body seem to counteract this by conferring some sense of unity upon the child's body, 'closing' the 'breach' opened up by the elimination of feces. Thus regulated by the mother, the child is "in the process of constituting itself as a body proper" (*Revolution* 26-27). Consequently, the anal-sadistic death drives, which fundamentally constitute the chora of the mother-child dyad, exist in a condition of oscillation between flow and stasis, defecation and retention, filth and cleanliness, as the symbolic seeks to exert its influence even at this preliminary stage of development. Although the symbolic will not come into its own until the thetic phase confers a body image upon the

child and individuates it, its pressure can already be felt. Nevertheless, at this point, the rhythm of the chora both generates the child's subjectivity and negates it. It is a fluctuating and mobile space in which the child experiences both its most rudimentary and provisional unity as a body and the rupturing of this unified figure. The chora is thus a rhythm of drive and stasis preceding the stability of the subject and the acquisition of speech, yet these already lie dormant within it as potential points of departure for developing the body as a signifying position.

The anal-sadistic drives of the fragmented body are fundamentally linguistic and are thus said to be "always already invested with semiosis" (*Revolution* 22). In this sense, Kristeva also refers to the drives of the chora as the semiotic. On the other hand, the stasis brought about through the regulatory activity of the mother will be developed, during the thetic phase, into the unified and transcendental subject opposing the fragmented body of the semiotic. Such a subject takes shape upon entering the symbolic order during the thetic phase. Finally, the dialectical interplay and oscillation between semiotic and symbolic is defined by Kristeva as the "signifying process."

After initially discussing the chora, Kristeva surveys a number of linguistic theories which share the presupposition of a unified, transcendental or Cartesian subject. In their own ways, Husserl, Chomsky and Hjelmslev all assume an ontology of positions occupied by subject and object as givens, with meaning already constituted through categories residing securely within the ego. Kristeva's main criticism of these systems is that they remain blind to the way in which the subject or ego is produced, not once, but repeatedly as a subject which is always in process or on trial. Her own theory describes the production of the subject as a break occurring in two ways. The implicit conflict between drive and stasis becomes a break between the semiotic and the symbolic in which the former is *repressed* by the latter. At the same time the world is broken up into subject and

object polarizations. As a revision of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kristeva's theory interprets this break or opposition between the semiotic and the symbolic along the lines of unconscious/conscious, id/superego oppositions. Yet this break is not an entirely clean one. The conflict between semiotic and symbolic continues to function after the thetic break as a continuous dialectic within both the subject and language. In spite of being repressed, the semiotic drives continue to find their way into both the conscious subject and language of the symbolic. Hence the subject, as one who is continually caught up in this process, is always on trial as a complex heterogeneous dynamic rather than a statically unified monad. Likewise, this signifying process creates language as an interwoven network of threads, weaving drives and the syntactical constraints of the symbolic together. The subject and language are thus perpetually conflicted by these dynamics, as the two inseparable modalities of semiotic and symbolic continually interact in a non-teleological dialectic.

Kristeva's thetic phase combines what Lacan identifies as the mirror stage of development with the onset of the castration complex through paternal interdiction. By combining these distinct stages into one phase of development, Kristeva emphasizes how the subject assumes a position within the symbolic by identifying itself as a whole body image rather than a body-in-pieces.[17] Beginning around six months of age, the mirror stage occurs when the child objectifies itself as a unified image and cathects this image as an object of pleasure in what is known as primary narcissism. Through the mirror stage the child overcomes its helplessness, dependence and prematuration at birth, which it understands and fantasizes in terms of its own body-in-pieces. This it accomplishes by identifying with the double it perceives through interaction with others and, most notably, through relationship with the mother. It anticipates its own full-body motor coordination in an image which it receives from its milieu and consequently

becomes more its double than itself. In other words, the child is seduced by the holistic image which it receives from the (M)other. Separated from the mother at birth and thrown into a condition of prematuration, uncoordination, helplessness and dependence, the child believes that it has found the solution to its difficulties by recognizing itself as the *imago* or *Gestalt* it receives from its milieu. This *Gestalt* is a deceptive lure since it is more a case of misrecognition than of the child recognizing itself in the mirror of the mother's face. By accepting the *imago* as itself, the child in fact deludes itself by treating this fictional identity as reality. Kristeva's language betrays how tenuous such identification is. The child must "capture his image unified in a mirror [while remaining] separate from it" (*Revolution* 46). In other words, identification with such a *Gestalt* resembles the pursuit of a fugitive from whom one is alienated even at the moment of fusion. Such mirror-stage identification can never soothe the persistent and perpetual psychic irritation of our orginary fragmentation. Nevertheless it inaugurates a process through which the subject stabilizes itself no matter how fictional such "permanent positing" may be (*Revolution* 47).

As Kristeva remarks, it is the onset of the castration complex at approximately eighteen months of age which puts the finishing touches on this process of individuation with the child's entry into the symbolic order. Once again, Kristeva takes her lead from Lacan, presupposing much of his own analysis. She adopts Lacan's notion of the symbolic as a fundamentally linguistic order, based on the notion of a symbol as that which "evokes a thing, a reality, by means of a substitute which this thing is not, evoking, in other words, its presence against a ground of absence" (Lemaire 51). Conceptualizing language in this manner, it is important to note that words or symbols, in standing in for the things themselves, interfere with our direct and immediate experience of those things. In a very important sense, the birth of the word is also the death or absence of the thing.

Moreover, language's ability to disrupt and mediate our relationship to reality is inaugurated by paternal interdiction as a linguistic event designated by Lacan as the paternal metaphor or Name-of-the-Father. Our continuity with the mother's body is consequently ruptured through this intervention as primarily a linguistic and cultural event. In other words, when the father intervenes as he who *has* the phallus, the phallic signifier becomes the symbolic or representational agent of separation and can be anything which says "no" to the mother/child dyad. It is in this context that the phallus becomes important as "'the signifier par excellence of the impossible identity'" (Lemaire 86). Originally the child wishes to *be* the phallus as the object of the mother's desire in order to ensure himself of her presence and complete support. In short, the mother becomes "the addressee of every demand [and] the receptacle and guarantor of . . . all narcissistic, hence imaginary, effects and gratifications" (*Revolution* 47). Yet paternal interdiction makes the mother/child fusion an impossibility, exposing the child to a chronic and profound sense of incompleteness as a residue of prematuration at birth: "The discovery of castration . . . detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack makes the phallic function a symbolic function--the symbolic function" (*Revolution* 47). That is to say, Lacan's creative synthesis of linguistics and psychoanalysis likens the incest taboo to the symbol insofar as both mediate and interfere with our direct and immediate experience of the thing, bringing about its death or absence. It just so happens that the thing in question is the mother's body as *the object* from which the child, *as subject*, is separated. Furthermore, this syntactical distinction is also accompanied by the child's ability to understand itself as an individuated first person pronoun. Consequently the incest taboo is inextricably linked to the acquisition of language as the precondition making the use of symbols possible.

As mentioned, the symbol not only interdicts our immediate relationship with the object but also acts as a substitute for it. This characteristic of the symbol, and of language in general as a symbolic order, is also homologous with psychosexual dynamics. Once again, it is the absence of the mother, as object, which lies at the root of both. This time, Lacan uses Freud's recounting of a game played by his grandson with a spool and some thread on the occasion of the grandson's separation from his mother. The child would repeatedly throw the spool over the edge of its crib and then pull it back using the attached piece of thread. Eventually each toss and 'disappearance' of the spool would be accompanied by sound mimicking what Freud took to be the word '*fort*' or away. Also, each retrieval and 'reappearance' of the spool, pulled in by the thread, would also be accompanied by sounds imitating, instead, what Freud understood as the word '*da*' or there. Gradually, it dawned upon Freud that his grandson was using, first this game, and then language, as a way of compensating for the mother's absence by providing a substitute for her. For Lacan, this text of Freud's in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* becomes a *locus classicus* for the belief that paternal interdiction facilitates the child's entry into the symbolic order and accession to language. Instead of grounding the symbol's interdictive capacity, it now makes symbolic substitution possible.

This dynamic of symbolic substitution, initiated by paternal interdiction, has broader social and cultural implications which extend beyond the range of language, narrowly construed, yet intersect and overlap it. Language or the symbolic, in other words, can also be conceived in terms provided by the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. In this context, the symbolic is understood as a social network of exchange, defined by the noncoincidence of filial and alliance relationships, lying ready to entrap and shape the child upon its entry into culture. With the onset of the castration complex and the hegemonic Law of the

Name-of-the-Father, the child assumes his or her place in a social order of patrilineal descent. The child is now obliged to submit "his or her sexuality to certain restrictions or laws; the laws of organization and exchange within a sexually differentiated group" by assuming a role within a family dominated by the father's sexual rights to the mother (Lemaire 81). As part of the price s/he pays for entry into society, the child is forbidden such access to the mother and must sacrifice the fusion of the mother/child dyad s/he previously enjoyed. This sacrifice, and the process of the child's socialization, are thoroughgoing linguistic events from beginning to end since the structure of the family is itself a linguistic structure, situating a child's individuality along a register or symbolic circuit of exchange. First, this structure defines as impossible those exchanges and flows of *jouissance* experienced through the immediacy of mother-child contact. Next it places the child in a system of relations in which everyone knows his or her own position and the limits placed upon their rights in the light of respect for others. Also, this assumption of a place in which one is defined in the context of a family constellation, entails a complex process of identification with the father. In the case of a 'son', for example, competition with the father displaces him from his privileged relationship to the mother. Instead of being the phallus for the mother, the child now discovers that it is the father who has the phallus, making the father the object of the mother's desire since he possesses what she lacks. The child is now reintroduced to the urgency of the question concerning the meaning of its own being. Previously, the polymorphous, perverse sexual relationship enjoyed by the son in relation to the mother provided him with an identity through the image he received during the mirror stage. This dynamic is now repressed by the Law in a move which effectively creates the unconscious. The primary narcissism of the mirror stage is driven underground by a primary repression. No longer able to shore up the gaps in its identity through a direct and immediate relationship with

the mother, the son must now learn to accept substitutes for her. This can only happen through the son's identification with the father, as his rival, a move already prepared for by the son's identification with himself, in the mirror stage, as his own rival and double. Such identification with the father also entails an acceptance of the entire social order, its ideals, and the regulations which govern interpersonal relationships and exchanges. Although the son can no longer be the phallus for his mother he can, like his father, struggle to have the phallus through socially conferred recognition, or he can give and receive the phallus in a full sexual relationship with a woman other than his mother. In both cases, this involves the acceptance of symbolic substitutes designed to meet the unconscious need which persistently demands the wholeness of a *Gestalt* or an image. Such critics as Irigaray interpret this psychosexual and social dynamic as inherently sexist and exploitative since women become prototypical symbolic substitutes, grounding all forms of exchange within hierarchically sexual, as well as political, economies.

Taken in its entirety, the thetic phase captures the child in its symbolic network and circulates him or her, as subject, through linguistic and legal channels of exchange. It grants the child a stable, individuated position by marking "a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and the symbolic" (*Revolution* 48). Yet the disruptive drives of the semiotic continue to infiltrate the symbolic across the thetic frontier, making of the subject a "split unification . . . produced by a rupture and . . . impossible without it" (*Revolution* 49). The heterogeneous dynamic of this signifying process creates an "exchange of hostility" between the semiotic and the symbolic. On the one hand, we have the "instinctual semiotic, preceding meaning and signification, mobile, amorphous" and striated with the anal flows of the death drive. This semiotic register surfaces and erupts in "fantasies" which "disrupt" and divest the subject of stability by turning it

"back towards the auto-erotic body." On the other hand, language as symbolic order serves as a "defensive construction" in spite of the subversive agitation of "the death drive underlying it." Through "narcissistic, specular [and] imaginary investment [the symbolic] protects the body from the attack of drives by making it a place . . . in which the body can signify itself through positions" (*Revolution* 49).

Kristeva goes on to argue that all "poetic 'distortions' of the signifying chain and the structure of signification" can be attributed to the heterogeneous activity of "those drives that the thetic phase was not able to sublate" or sublimate (*Revolution* 49). Such linguistic disruption also constitutes a "disturbance of the 'social censorship'" brought on by "an influx of the death drive, which no signifier, no mirror, no other and no mother could ever contain" (*Revolution* 49-50). In "'artistic' practices the semiotic--the precondition of the symbolic--is revealed as that which also destroys the symbolic," yet this is prevented by "a decisive imposition of the phallic" which has already taken place in the process of socialization. The subject, having been "firmly posited by castration" is now defended "so that drive attacks against the thetic will not give way to fantasy or to psychosis." Even though the phallus provides something of a breakwater against the dissolution of the subject, the drives of the semiotic chora continue to beat against the symbolic constraints of language: "This is precisely what artistic practices, and notably poetic language, demonstrate." Hence poetry is not to be thought of as a complete "refusal of the thetic" or hypostasis of semiotic motility (*Revolution* 50). Instead poetic practice requires that the text first "hold together as a text" after which "the semiotic pulverizes it only to make it a new device" (*Revolution* 51).

Having analyzed the signfying process as an ongoing dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic we are now in a position to understand how poetry may be thought of as revolutionary practice. The imposition of the thetic phase and

the hegemony of the symbolic are, for Kristeva, part of a system based on sacrifice and violence. The original sacrifice is the murder of the father by the primal horde of sons, as put forth by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. When the sons subsequently erect a totem to take the father's place, we have the simultaneous creation of both the symbol and the symbolic order. The totem both acts as a symbolic substitute for the father, and confirms the incest taboo as well as the exchange network it authorizes. Yet the real ongoing violence is "the structural violence of language's irruption as the murder of soma, the transformation of the body, the captation of drives." It is the sustained hegemony of the symbolic order, made possible by the father's murder and resurrection, which enacts real violence. Moreover, the inherent violence of the symbolic order is aptly represented by the implicit violence contained within the "irruption of the symbol, killing substance to make it signify" (*Revolution* 75). The birth of the symbol is the death of the thing.

In opposition to the repressive violence of the symbolic, the semiotic initiates its own kind of counter-violence. Confronting the symbolic as "the machine, colonial expansion, banks, science, Parliament [and as] those positions of mastery that conceal their violence and pretend to be mere neutral legality," the semiotic undertakes its own subversive kind of intra-psychic and intra-linguistic guerrilla warfare. It introduces "into the structural positing of the thetic in language" a countervailing violence "surging up through the phonetic, syntactic, and logical orders [reaching] the symbolic order and the technocratic ideologies that [have] been built over [semiotic] violence to ignore or repress it" (*Revolution* 83). Yet the full revolutionary import of semiotic violence is not, first and foremost, the overthrow of the symbolic, but its *transformation* brought about through the metamorphosis of the subject as "the dangerous and violent crucible" of a signifying process (*Revolution* 104). Revolution begins as a process of self-transformation in which the unified, atomistic, "opaque and impenetrable

subject of social relations and struggles [becomes] a subject in process/on trial." To this end, poetic texts have a social function: "the production of a different kind of subject, one capable of bringing about new social relations, and thus joining in the process of capitalism's subversion" (*Revolution* 105).

The transformation of the subject is accomplished through the agency of a transference relationship between the subject as reader, and the poetic text. In a traditional psychoanalytic context, transference occurs during the course of treatment when a patient displaces unconscious ideas onto the analyst. The immediacy of the analytic situation makes it possible for the patient to act out earlier infantile conflicts by replacing their object with the person of the analyst. These conflicts are often Oedipal in nature, with the analyst put into the role of a loved or feared parental figure, or some other member of the patient's family. Although various types of transference can be identified (maternal, fraternal, etc.) Freud acknowledges that the image of the patient's father is usually the decisive factor in such relations (Laplanche 455-461). For Lacan, and apparently also for Kristeva, this orthodox model of transference has become in the hands of North American ego psychology a betrayal of Freud's original insight into the split nature of the subject. Following the rise of fascism throughout western Europe, many analysts fled their home countries and eventually came to settle in America, both during and after the war. Lacan argues that they became assimilated by the American ideology of free enterprise and proceeded to deform psychoanalysis, producing a psychology "peculiarly suited to American values, giving the American people what they want[ed]" (Gallop, *Lacan* 57). Lacan itemizes some of these values as "'success, happiness, happy end [and] *basic personality*'" (Gallop, *Lacan* 57; emphasis added). Hence American ego-psychology betrayed psychoanalysis through "a repression of the unconscious, and a self-righteous manipulation of patients" into believing that they had a unified and non-conflicted

ego (Gallop, *Lacan* 57). Rather than admit that the subject is perpetually torn between consciousness and unconscious drives, ego-psychology reinterpreted Freud in a cultural context defined by American individualism. This revision of psychoanalysis found its way into practise via the transference situation where, as Gallop observes

> the analyst's "strong" ego would serve as a model for rebuilding the "weak" ego of the patient. Thus the analyst was authorized by his theory to believe in and act out the transferential illusion, becoming the good, strong parent, the ultimate role model, without even questioning the imaginary structuring of that role, nor how it minoritized the patient and enhanced the analyst's self-deluded prestige.
>
> (*Lacan* 29)

Kristeva's analysis of the revolutionary import of poetry begins with a similar critique of ego psychology and its reactionary misappropriation of the phenomenon of transference:

> In the process of transference in analysis, *discourse* establishes the subject within language precisely because transference permits the analysand to take over the (power of) discourse the analyst is presumed to hold.
>
> (*Revolution* 208)

In other words, analysis serves the purposes of the symbolic, securing the position of the analyst and then the analysand, within those sanctioned circuits of exchange which individuate them. The poetic text reproduces the transference relationship by taking the place, so to speak, of the analyst's authority as the one who is presumed to know. Yet this is done with a very important difference: the text does not provide the reader/analyst with a strong ego with which he or she can identify, but rather generates a signifying process which shatters subjectivity, pulverizing it with flows of anal-sadistic jouissance:

> The text's signifying practice thus retains the analytic situation's requirement that the process of the subject be realized in language. The absence of a *represented* focal point of transference prevents this process from becoming locked into an identification that can do no more than adapt the subject to social and family structures. To hamper transference, the text's analysis must produce the certainty that the analyst's place is empty, that "he" is dead, and that rejection can only attack signifying structures. This is textual practice's presupposition and its starting point. Admittedly, the designated addressees of the text are often its focus of transference, its objects of attempted seduction and aggression. But this transference relation . . . is controlled more by the *structure* of the text than by the *other*, the addressee, and, in any case . . . it allows the text to operate in a much wider signifying field than it otherwise would, and to carry out much more radical subversions, which, far from stopping at desire, involve the subject's very jouissance.
>
> (*Revolution* 209)

Although the text reproduces the transference relation, the father, once represented in the person of the analyst, is in one sense killed off by the signifying process. Consequently, the social and family structures of the symbolic are also undone along with the demise of the paternal function. The reader, as addressee or analyst, can thus only identify with the text's heterogeneity. This transformation of the subject, away from its former individuated self, also has implications for the symbolic structures of society. Having become a signifying process, the subject also turns into a conduit or passageway through which the semiotic is released into the world, disrupting the structure of the symbolic for the sake of an alternative resymbolization:

> the text constructed itself with respect to an empty place . . . in turn comes to be the empty site of a process in which its readers become involved. The text turns out to be the analyst and every reader the analysand. But since the *structure and function of language take the place of the focus of transference* in the text, this opens the way for all linguistic, symbolic, and social structures to be put in process/on trial. The text thereby attains its essential dimension: it is a *practice* calling into question (symbolic and social) *finitudes* by proposing *new signifying devices*. In calling the text a practice we must not forget that it is a new practice, radically different from the mechanistic practice of a null and void, atomistic subject who refuses to acknowledge that he is a subject of language. Against such a "practice," the text as signifying practice points toward the possibility--which is a jouissance--of a *subject who speaks his being put in process/on trial through action.*
>
> (*Revolution* 210)

Having discussed poetry's subversive potential, it remains to be seen exactly how the anal drives of the semiotic infiltrate the symoblic in order to reconstitute it. A brief consideration of the process of rejection and its oralization, as set forth by Kristeva in *Revolution*, will assist us in clarifying this issue.

As we saw previously, the symbolic order takes its name from the functioning of the symbol as that which substitutes for a lost or missing object whose absence it also produces. In other words, it is the rejection of the object (i.e., the mother), brought on by the intervention of the symbol (i.e., the phallus) which makes language use possible for the child upon entry into the symbolic. Although this process of symbolization begins, for Lacan, with the onset of the castration complex, Kristeva locates its beginnings in a basic biological operation of scission, separation, and division known as rejection (123). Specifically,

Kristeva stresses "the importance of anal rejection or anality, which precedes the establishment of the symbolic and is both its precondition and its repressed element" (149). Focusing on p oedipal anal drives, Kristeva agrees with Freud in recognizing the existence of a "primary sadism" which can be directed towards the ego as a "primary masochism" prior to the differentiation of subject and object (150). Hence rejection begins as a pleasurable discharge "at the very moment substances belonging to the body are separated and rejected from the body" (151). The sadistic component of such a "jubilant loss" occurs in the action of anal sphincters as they *pinch off* a column of feces while defecating (151). Because such sadistic pleasure of separation is preoedipal, it is chronologically prior to the child's ability to recognize its own body and other objects as detached and distinguishable alterities (151). As a result, a problematic ambivalence surfaces in the child since sadistic pleasure "is simultaneously felt as an attack against the expelled object, all exterior objects . . . and the body itself" (162). Hence the correspondence between primary sadism and masochism. It is the onset of the castration complex and the Oedipal stage which assists the child in curbing the sadistic pleasure of separation by checking the aggressivity of rejection. As we have seen, the thetic phase individuates the child by "identifying the body proper with one of the parents" (151). Kristeva now emphasizes the way in which such individuation makes it possible for the child to distinguish clearly between its own body and surrounding objects. Consequently the feces it 'amputates' while defecating is no longer confused with its own body as a body part or limb which it has aggressively severed. Feces now becomes a rejected object which

> definitively separates and is not simply rejected but suppressed as a material object; it is the 'opposite other' with whom only one relation is possible--that of the sign, symbolic relation in *absentia*. Rejection is thus a step on the way to the object's becoming-sign, at which the object will be

> detached from the body and isolated as a real object. In other words, rejection is a step on the way to the imposition of the *superego*.
>
> (151)

The rejection of feces is thus caught up in the same process which interdicts the mother-child dyad. Both feces and the mother's body are definitively separated from their confusion with the child's body and created as real, independent objects through the imposition of the paternal function. In both cases, moreover, pleasure is repressed either in the form of sadistic or incestuous *jouissance*. This correspondence between anality and the maternal function is not just coincidental and will be considered in more detail with the discussion of oralization, below. For the present, however, one can conclude that anal rejection sets the stage for the use of symbols by foreshadowing the creation of a real world for which language can act as substitute. Although the final break between subject and object is initiated by the thetic phase, the groundwork is already laid by the semiotic's anal sadistic drives.

Looked at from a slightly different perspective, the sadistic *jouissance* of anal rejection gets repressed when the body, as pleasure-ego, becomes unified, individuated and protected through the agency of the superego, expelling the by-products of anality as exclusively bad and external. Kristeva's highly condensed analysis of this process borrows primarily from Freud's paper on "Negation." Originally the subject, as pleasure-ego, coincides with all that is pleasurable and designates as 'world' all that is unpleasurable. Although the child, at this stage, wishes to introject all that is pleasurable and project all that is unpleasurable, this process does not yet lead to clear, objective distinctions between itself and reality. Much of what will later be realistically identified as the world is seen by the child as its own, including the mother's breast which it seeks to introject, and the feces which it projects. With the onset of the castration complex, however, the sexual

economy of the pleasure-ego is redistributed so that these erstwhile sources of pleasure become lost as part of an objective world. Also, this world retains something of its earlier negative charge since both feces and the mother's breast are definitively rejected as bad, alien and external. This is apparently how primitive incestuous and sadistic sources of *jouissance* get repressed. Hence paternal interdiction finalizes the distinction between subject and object which the pleasure-ego had already initiated in its own confused way, through its inherent antagonisms between pleasure and unpleasure, introjection and projection, and good and bad. Once the subject is thus constituted, it gives rise to the reality-ego as that which seeks to rediscover an object in the world equivalent to the image of a lost satisfying object (Laplanche 231). But most importantly, for Kristeva this process of reality testing is linguistic in nature since the image functions as a symbolic substitute for the lost object it searches for. Thus anal-sadistic rejection is the repressed precondition of the real and also the capacity of language to displace it.

In spite of this repression of anal rejection, as a precondition of language, the semiotic manages to resurface by displacing its sadistic energy onto a process of oralization. Kristeva begins this part of her analysis by comparing oralization, as a connection to the mother's breast, with rejection. Oralization, she argues, is characterized by an ambivalence similar to that of rejection. On the one hand, the child's initial burrowing movement into the breast is meant to establish pleasurable contact with her in a biologically indispensable fusion. Such pleasure is akin to the pleasure obtained through anal rejection. As Kristeva observes, "fusing orality and the libidinal drive it supports are *borne* by rejection and, . . . , *determined* by it" (154). On the other hand, the thetic phase intervenes and changes the status of oralization "ensuring the body's separation from and always already negative relation to the outside and the other" (154). Consequently the

burrowing movement "takes on a negative value by the age of six months," which anticipates the child's use of the abstract "no" at fifteen months, when the paternal function more or less sets in (154). Moreover, this latter refusal of the breast is similar to the definitive separation of subject and object undergone by rejection when beset by paternal interdiction.

Aside from these important corresponding factors, there are also crucial differences between oralization and anal rejection. One of these is that "Fusing orality and . . . refusing, negative orality are . . . closely intermingled" (154). While the pleasure of anal rejection is repressed and submerged in the course of the creation of a world through rejection, Kristeva's use of "intermingled" suggests a return of the repressed through oralization, in ways which her discussion of anality did not hint at. Another important difference is her observation that "The oral cavity and the glottis are the only internal organs that do not have the characteristic capacity of muscular apparatuses to restrain bound energy" (154). What she seems to suggest here is that the mouth, unlike the anal sphincters, cannot be used to restrain pleasure in the same way that anal retention can postpone the pleasure of excretion. Although anal retention can be interpreted in different, conflicting ways, Kristeva's general discussion in *Revolution* interprets it as complying with parental injunctions against the tendency to defecate anywhere and at will. Anal retention would thus comply with the mother's regulation of the child's orifices as a foreshadowing of the paternal function.

By focusing on speech as a form of rejection, and by integrating some of the above points of comparison between anality and oralization, Kristeva is able to argue for the irruption of the semiotic through language. To begin, rejection as a "negative discharge . . . uses the muscular apparatus as a passageway for discharging energy in brief spurts" (154). In other words "rejection may pass through the vocal apparatus as well" (154). Speech thus becomes a form of

rejection similar to the negative implications of the child's burrowing movement which rejects the mother. It also duplicates the activity of rejection when it definitively and clearly leads to the creation of reality. Although speech seems to function entirely within the limits of the symbolic, the intermingled nature of oralization, its determination by anal sadistic pleasure, and its inability to restrain this pleasure, all contribute to a rechanneling of the semiotic through language. Since negative orality is intermingled with the positive, pleasurable fusion with the mother's breast, and this, in turn, is bound by sadistic drive motility, such anality finds its way into language:

> the rejection that invests the oral cavity awakens in and through it the "libidinal," "unifying," "positive" drive which characterizes, at the earliest stages, this same activity in its initial 'burrowing' movement. Through the new phonematic and rhythmic network it produces, rejection becomes a source of 'aesthetic' pleasure. Thus, without leaving the line of meaning, it cuts up and reorganizes that line by imprinting on it the path of drives through the body: from the anus to the mouth.
>
> (155)

As mentioned, such an irruption of the semiotic in poetic utterance reconstitutes the reader within a signifying process and transforms this subject in process/on trial as a conduit for the release of anal sadistic motility throughout the whole of the symbolic order. This does not lead to the elimination of the symbolic but, instead, produces a creative and progressive restructuring of its discourse:

> when rejection is brought back to its essential motor functions, when it necessarily becomes, whether unconsciously or voluntarily, the maintained and reinforced agent of the signifying process, it produces new cultural and social formations which are innovative and . . . subversive.
>
> (161-162)

Finally, the characterization of the semiotic as a conflicted oscillation between anal sadistic drive motility and symbolic-induced stasis provides us with a homologous point of comparison with rejection insofar as the latter is both a source of sadistic pleasure and of the retaliatory terrors of masochism. As compromise formations constituted by alternate attitudes towards anality, the semiotic and rejection can also stand comparison with another concept of Kristeva's: that of abjection. What she refers to as the semiotic or rejection in *Revolution* she discusses from a different point of view as abjection in *Powers Of Horror*. Hence conflicts within the semiotic and rejection now become recast as a simultaneous fascination and repulsion with respect to excrement and other forms of filth such as vomit, urine and menstrual blood. By combining these works and concepts as parts of an eclectic theoretical apparatus, this study will be in a position to examine the subversive features of the semiotic as it functions in Blake's aesthetic theory and *The Four Zoas*.

The Phallic Mother and Abjection

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva revises Lacan in order to place greater emphasis on preoedipal and pre-imaginary relations between mother and child. Notwithstanding this shift, Kristeva does not dwell specifically on the mother but concentrates instead on the rhythms set in motion through her interactions with the child. Originating within the chora, these rhythms implicitly rely on a maternal 'space' to which Kristeva indirectly alludes through her utilization of this Platonic concept. As the "nurse of all Becoming" or "the mother and Receptacle of what has come to be," the chora, for Plato, is the source of all possible shapes (Cornford 177, 186) just as it is the starting point of linguistic and psycho-social development for Kristeva. It is only after *Revolution*

that Kristeva expands the role of the mother as a central figure in her discussion of processes which continue to rely on semiotic and psychoanalytic elements transposed into a broader cultural context. While building on and presupposing the theoretical groundwork of *Revolution*, Kristeva moves in a much more explicitly feminist direction by focusing on the mother in a series of subsequent works. In *Revolution*, the conflicts comprising the semiotic, as well as the semiotic/symbolic conflict of the signifying process, are all discussed primarily as linguistic phenomena. Although Kristeva alludes to non-linguistic expressions of these conflicts through colour, gesture or music, she does not explicitly discuss these other cultural forms until her work takes this significant maternal turn. The mother now becomes the explicit site of conflicts capable of pulverizing the symbolic and scrambling the gender-coded hierarchies articulating it through a variety of cultural media. Two works which are particularly important to an understanding of this development in Kristeva are "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini," in which she discusses the fantasy of the phallic mother, and *Powers of Horror* as an account of the mother as abject.

In her essay on "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini," Kristeva introduces us to the phallic mother as a conflicted configuration representing both the incestuous dynamics of the mother-child dyad (i.e., anaclisis/autoerotism) and the threat of castration. It is the phallic mother's mediation of processes of dismemberment that identifies her with both the psychotic and the symbolic. For Kristeva, the phallic mother can possessively seduce the child in a preoedipal drama fragmenting the child into diverse erotogenic zones. Aside from ravishing the child, she can also aggressively terrorize it and administer the symbolic through the threat of castration. Hence the phallic mother mediates the autoerotic, facilitating the discovery of erotogenic zones as one kind of

dismemberment while also legislating the Law of the Name-of-the-Father as another.

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva also identifies the phallic mother in her symbolic incarnation as the agent of castration who threatens the child phobic. In the course of treatment, however, the phobic discovers a different, more conflicted, maternal configuration represented by excrement and other forms of filth or defilement. Known as the abject, this representation of the maternal is subjected to an expulsion from the body much like the voiding of feces discussed by Kristeva as rejection in *Revolution*. The anal sadistic drive motility of rejection, which is also the anal sadistic drive of the semiotic, is now recast as the anality of abjection. Moreover, the abject is also characterized by conflict along the same lines as the signifying process. This time, however, the split between semiotic and symbolic is reworked as a simultaneous fascination and repulsion by excrement.

The phallic mother and the abject are not the only maternal figures developed by Kristeva in work subsequent to *Revolution*. In "Stabat Mater," for example, she presents us with an essay on the cult of the Virgin Mary. While having once provided Catholicism with an understanding of motherhood and femininity, the contemporary demise of this cult leaves us, Kristeva argues, without a replacement discourse defining motherhood. Yet Kristeva splits her essay vertically between two columns of print--one of which contains an historical analysis of this problem while the other appears to suggest a solution in terms of an autobiographical meditation on Kristeva's own experience of motherhood. Kristeva thus offers us the figure of the birth-mother whose speech can potentially provide us with this new discourse. Interestingly enough, her speech is conflicted in ways that remind us of Kristeva's other theoretical formations. Speaking from a position of authority on the experience of motherhood, the birth-mother occupies a position within the symbolic ordinarily reserved for the father as the subject

presumed to know. Yet she also disclaims any knowledge, since speech fails adequately to describe the "undecidable" experience of motherhood (*Reader* 168). Torn between the cohesiveness of the paternal position and the conflicted experience of the fetus as something which is part of one's body yet alien to it, the birth-mother reproduces a conflict reminiscent of the signifying process.

Finally in *Tales of Love* Kristeva presents us with a somewhat strange reinterpretation of the autoerotic mother-child dyad in which the mother is discussed as an imaginary father. Ordinarily the father enters into psychosocial development during the Oedipal phase and serves as an Ego Ideal with which the child identifies in order to complete the individuation process. Yet Kristeva argues that the father must somehow be present *prior* to the onset of the castration complex since individuation begins during the mirror stage. Moreover, the child's identification with its imago during the mirror stage presupposes that some manifestation of the father should be present *prior* even to this stage in order to make it possible. Hence the imaginary father becomes a catalyst active within the child's autoerotism, prompting the child towards those identifications which will eventually enable it to overcome its experience of fragmentation. One way in which Kristeva equates the imaginary father with the archaic mother is through the meaning identification has in psychoanalysis as a process originating in oral incorporation. By feeding at its mother's breast the child discovers its own autoerotic sexuality through anaclisis and breaks up into discrete erotogenic zones. A fantasy associated with this fragmentation is that of the phallic mother dismembering the child in retaliation for its own oral greed. In this case the phallic mother is the bad breast precipitating the child into the paranoid-schizoid position. The imaginary father, however, is accessed through another form of oral incorporation (identification) having the good breast as its object. Serving as the good mother, the imaginary father works as an antidote to the phallic mother,

and leads the way out of a horrifyingly fragmented experience into one of narcissistic wholeness and individuation. The phallic mother and imaginary father thus function together as another possible way of understanding the semiotic split between drive and stasis.

Admittedly these maternal figures are not as subversive as the dynamics and rhetoric of *Revolution* and represent a modification of its more overt political agenda. As indicated, however, the disruptive activity of semiotic rhythms is still present within these figures as a potential threat to the symbolic. Specifically, the phallic mother and the abject are those maternal figures which are most appropriate when considering the semiotic subversion of Blake's masculine Human Form Divine. The remainder of the chapter will discuss these figures in preparation for an interpretation of Blake's work as influenced and undermined by them. By amplifying the subversive potential inherent within them one can radicalize the mother as an operational base for a feminist reverse discourse.

The Phallic Mother

Blake's notion of the vortex serves as a point of entry into a discussion of Kristeva's phallic mother. Drawing upon its Latin etymology and place within mythology, Nelson Hilton describes the vortex as an eddy or whirlpool functioning as a gate or drain between two worlds or levels of experience. Blake's vortex behaves in accordance with this tradition, making it possible for spirits to descend to Generation or ascend out of the vegetative world along a spiral track or trajectory (*Literal* 205-06). Hilton further points out that the Latin root *vorare*, "to devour," merges with *vortex* in such words as "voraginous" or "vorago." That Blake genders the image of the vortex as female, while drawing on the full range of its etymological connotations, is evident from texts such as *Milton* and *The Four Zoas*. As Hilton maintains, this cluster of connotations

> anticipates a psychoanalytic interpretation of the vortex as the vagina . . . in which 'the hairy vulva is fantasied as a *vortex* which, by *suction*, draws the victim into the vagina.' . . . The vortex manifests the suction and seduction of veiling, spectral nature: Vala as virago, consumer, devourer, and consummation.
>
> (*Literal* 206-209)

Blake's use of the vortex motif is connected in certain ways with an "archaic male fear" in which the "instinctual response" to the whirpool is one of terror at being swallowed and lured into an "abortive gulf." In Blake's myth, the vortex acts as a gap or drain through which the imaginative mind sinks into a vegetated body. The mind as it falls "rushes toward matter" and, as Hilton intimates, it is also drawn toward *mater* or the mother (*Literal* 209). The vortex precipitates one's fall into time-space consciousness as a psychic allegory of the child's body being incorporated and dismembered back into the mother's body through a hungry vaginal mouth. The figure of the vortex is thus connected with the primal fantasy of the threatening phallic mother who consumes penises during intercourse. Although not named directly, the vortex appears in the following passage from *Milton*, cited by Hilton, as a ravenous maternal space shrinking consciousness into a fallen perspectivism:

> Then Los & Enitharmon knew that Satan is Urizen
> *Drawn down* by Orc & the Shadowy Female into Generation
> Oft Enitharmon enterd weeping into the Space, there appearing
> An aged Woman raving along the Streets (the Space is named
> Canaan) then she returned to Los weary frighted as from dreams
> The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the Organs
> Of Life till they become Finite & Itself seems Infinite.
> And Satan vibrated in the immensity of the Space! Limited

To those without but Infinite to those within: it *fell down* and
Became Canaan: closing Los from Eternity in Albions Cliffs.

(10: 1-10; emphasis added)

In this case, Urizen becomes Satan by being sucked through the vaginal gates and into the body of the phallic mother referred to here simply as "Female Space."[18] The issue for Blake, however, is that such a passage does not have to be unidirectional. It is possible, and preferable, to reverse the process and rise up, out of Generation and into Eden. On the one hand, a fall through the vortex may cause us to mistake our limited point of view for a perception of the infinite. Nevertheless we can begin from such particulars and imaginatively transform them into a perception of the inifinite by renegotiating a return passage. We can shrink imaginatively "in an attempt to compact a hard-core identity," falling "into the little, self-defining eddy of free-floating anxiety and wrath that commences with our being drawn through the vagina." Yet if the vortex "keeps us from . . . Paradise . . . [it] . . . also offers the medium . . . that could . . . draw us to it" (*Literal* 210, 226).

As evidence of this fundamental ambivalence, Hilton offers us numerous examples of a corresponding image to that of the vortex: the wheel as a kind of cross-sectional "cut" when seen from above. In one very important sense, Blake employs the wheel as an image for Cartesian and Newtonian cosmologies. Blake's many references to wheels are specifically directed towards the "wheel of heaven" or "starry wheels" of a universe often represented as "a mill with complicated wheels." These figures were embodied in models of the solar system which moved with clockwork precision based on a network of gears and cogged or toothed wheels. In Hilton's estimation, these elaborate toys were themselves metaphors for the "gathering mechanization of life and thought that Blake perceived" as well as the "logical, linear, cause-and-effect organization predicated by such material

improvement" (*Literal* 218). Nevertheless these Satanic wheels can be invested with, and countered by, a countervailing, redemptive and imaginative movement. One finds an instance of such antithetical movement in the closing lines to Night I of *The Four Zoas*:

> Terrific ragd the Eternal Wheels of intellect terrific ragd
> The living creatures of the wheels in the Wars of Eternal life
> But perverse rolled the wheels of Urizen & Luvah back reversd
> Downwards & outwards consuming in the Wars of Eternal Death. . . .
>
> (22: 12-15)

Citing eighteenth-century physics, Hilton also observes how some of Blake's contemporaries conceived of a vortex as the meeting of contrary or qualitatively different currents flowing in opposite directions, much like the conflicting wheels described above. He concludes that such a vortex, as it occurs in Blake, "may be seen as the dynamic form of dialectic," capable of providing us with passage to Eden or away from it (*Literal* 225).

For our purposes there are implications in Hilton's discussion which he does not elaborate. One is the way in which the vortex can help us in understanding Blake's conflicted view of women and especially the mother, since passage through the whirlpool becomes a kind of birth which is either fortunate or unfortunate. Moreover the vortex as vagina doubles as a mouth which also dismembers as it consumes. Hence, both the fall and resurrection of imagination presuppose a consummation in which the phallic mother becomes the primary conduit. If this is the case, how then are we to conceive of the phallic mother's virtual split personality as a dismembering female who is both positive and negative? Moreover, once we answer this question will it enhance our understanding of Blake's conflicted female figure?

These issues can be illuminated through a discussion of Kristeva's "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini." Kristeva begins by considering the condition of motherhood itself as a site or space in which oppositions engage each other in such a way that a stable identity becomes impossible. The growth of a child within the mother's body as a "graft" creates a "dual and alien space" similar to what might be called a zone of undecidability (237). Mother and fetus exist as a kind of binary opposition between self and other in which these separate terms, nevertheless, interpenetrate through the rhythmical exchange of fluids. The mother-child dyad in this primal, intrauterine phase thus constitutes a borderline or frontier which also has linguistic consequences for Kristeva. On the one hand, there is someone who exists throughout the process of becoming-a-mother, a subject whose identity is clearly defined by what Lacan and Kristeva call the symbolic. Yet there are also forces at work disrupting the hegemony of such biological and socio-symbolical identity. These forces are characterized as "unsymbolized instinctual drives" by Kristeva who, in the same breath, acknowledges the mother as the subject and master of this process even though such mastery is simultaneously a delusion. Motherhood may be a condition in which one is threatened by the psychotic loss of identity but it is also subject to the symbolic representations of social intercourse. What Kristeva attempts to describe is a condition in which "psychotic tendencies are acknowledged, but at the same time they are settled, quieted, and bestowed upon the mother in order to maintain the ultimate guarantee: symbolic coherence." In short "the maternal body is the place of a splitting" (238). Finally this splitting, as a conflict between the symbolic and the psychotic, is another way of characterizing the conflicted structure of the signifying process as an opposition between the castration complex, and incest as a refusal or denial of castration. In this case, Kristeva

employs a notion of psychosis which includes a "rejection of reality–or rather, of a highly specific 'reality', namely, castration" (Laplanche 372).

Kristeva goes on to describe motherhood in terms which are psychotic as well as symbolic. The pregnant mother, in spite of the psychotic forces at work, is still "under the sway of the paternal function" in so far as she is a "symbolizing, speaking subject." In this capacity, though, she functions as a "filter . . . thoroughfare [or] threshold" where the opposing tendencies of the symbolic and the psychotic meet (238). As the agent of the paternal function, the mother will ensure the child's passage into the stability of the symbolic order. This appears to be the role which Kristeva bestows upon the fantasy of the phallic mother, a condition in which the mother expedites the activity of the paternal function through the threat of castration. Motherhood thus becomes a desire which is still subject to the Oedipus complex, penis envy, and the creation of femininity as the resigned acceptance of the substitution of baby for penis. Yet in spite of this subordination to the paternal function there remains a "nonsymbolic, nonpaternal causality." This other causality has its origins in the homosexual contact between mother and daughter which is reawakened through the experience of gestation. It is during pregnancy that the one about to give birth regresses "phantasmatically," experiencing a desire for reunion with the body of her own mother. That is to say, she 'reexperiences' her own gestation within her mother's womb as "*the same continuity differentiating itself*" and draws closer to her "instinctual memory" of intrauterine existence (239; emphasis added). Hence while satisfying the paternalistic preconditions for her identity as a woman, the mother simultaneously (re)experiences her own preoedipal undecidability and becomes "more open to her own psychosis, and consequently, more negatory of the social, symbolic bond" (239). She becomes the site of a psychic rift between a phallic, symbolic paternal facet and a homosexual-maternal facet, between the logic of subjects and objects,

and a dizzying "whirl of words" in which meaning surrenders to "feeling, displacement, rhythm, sound [and] flashes." Another way in which Kristeva characterizes this rift is by describing the mother-daughter dyad as an enclosure whose walls are porous. The preserve of *jouissance*, alterity, contradiction and difference nevertheless remains open to the infiltrations of the paternal function as a "powerful sublimation and indwelling of the symbolic within instinctual drives" (240).

In "Motherhood According To Giovanni Bellini" there appear to be only two ways in which one can gain access to this psycho-linguistic twilight zone. One is through the experience of giving birth, while the second route is through art as a very special kind of discursive practice. The experience of motherhood automatically sets in motion physiological operations and instinctual drives which the symbolic strives to seal off and censure (241). Yet in spite of this psychic hegemony, every new gestation becomes a privileged psychotic moment in which a woman pulverizes any identity set up by the castration complex. Paradoxically, this avenue is opened up by traditional phallocentric notions of femininity. Moreover, the maternal process initiated by the symbolic also acts to subvert it. In other words, the constellation of "language-symbolism-paternity" is the only "way to symbolically represent, to objectify, and to explain this *unsettling* of the symbolic stratum" (242; emphasis added). This move resembles a kind of psychic *jujitsu* through which the oppressive, paternal weight of the symbolic can be used against itself. Hence the phallic mother not only mediates on behalf of the paternal function but also supervises a regression whose manifestations lead "to the negation of symbolic position" (242). It is through a discussion of Bellini's art that we learn more about the phallic mother's conflicted, and hence subjectless, status.

Kristeva begins by defining art as a sublimation which takes place "at the very moment of primal repression" (242). In order to understand how she uses this concept we need to examine how Freud and Lacan develop it before her. In Freud, there is repression proper and then there is a structurally anterior primal repression. According to Freud, repression proper takes place through the activity of two simultaneous influences: a superior psychical agency such as the superego can repress an idea by repulsing it, but this process must be complemented by an attraction exerted upon the idea by psychic contents which are already unconscious (Laplanche 334). This dynamic assumes that these attracting psychic contents were initially present as unconscious nuclei without having been drawn there by other ones. It is this psychic substratum which Freud attributes to a primal repression and fixation, especially when this latter term refers to early childhood experiences by which a subject has been marked, and as a result of which he retains an attachment to archaic modes of satisfaction, types of object and forms of relationship (Laplanche 162). These early experiences are traumatic, very intense, and produce excessive degrees of excitation. Although Freud is not very specific about the nature of such experiences, Kristeva, and Lacan before her, are more clear in designating the mother as the site of these traumas. For Lacan, that which is at the source of primal repression is radically indefinable and incapable of representation as an object (Gallop, *Lacan* 151). Not only is the primary repressed never present to consciousness as an "object" but there never is a "subject" capable of representing it. It is this notion of primal repression which lies at the basis of Lacan's concept of desire as a nostalgia which is constitutively unsatisfied and unsatisfiable because its "object" simply cannot ever be defined (Gallop, *Lacan* 151). When Kristeva claims that "primal repression is just another expression for primary narcissism" she gives a very specific location in time and place to the traumatic experiences upon which the child has become fixated (269).

It would appear then that what we are dealing with in primal repression are those autoerotic experiences through which the child discovers his own sexuality as a by-product of his anaclitic relationship to the mother. In this dynamic, mother and child are "recognized" only as part objects capable of giving and receiving organ pleasure. Because of this fundamental fragmentation at preoedipal levels of sexual organization, Kristeva can claim that "the artist speaks from a place where she [the mother] is not, where she knows not . . . the Mother as subject is a delusion" (242).

If, as Kristeva claims, artists do 'identify' with the mother, it is specifically through their own ineffable jouissance which is "beyond discourse, beyond narrative, beyond psychology, beyond lived experience and biography--in short, beyond figuration" (247). In the case of Giovanni Bellini, this shattered space of "the lost-unrepresentable-forbidden *jouissance* of a hidden mother" could not be conveyed on canvas through a recognizable female body but only through a non-verbal, non-symbolic rhythm of colour and space (248). But before achieving this psychic and artistic breakthrough, in which background and colour grow in importance, it becomes necessary for Bellini to come to terms with a figuration of the conflicted maternal condition. As a semiotic process, maternity is pre-symbolic and pre-thetic and is consequently inaccessible to a "fetishism of the body" respecting the integrity of the delineated human form (245). Since the subject-position set up by the thetic phase also creates a unified body image, any kind of humanist realism in art must either repress and exclude the semiotic or find another place for it on the canvas outside of the human figure. While ultimately opting for the latter alternative, Bellini first undergoes a process of development in which he uses the human figure in order to represent the conflicted space of the maternal condition. In doing so, he pursues a course which Kristeva theoretically maps out in *Revolution*:

> the subject must be firmly posited by castration so that drive attacks against the thetic will not give way to fantasy and psychosis but will instead lead to a "second degree thetic," i.e., a resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language. This is precisely what artistic . . . practices demonstrate.
>
> (50)

In other words, Bellini first approaches the semiotic by depicting it within a symbolic form (i.e. the human figure) which must nevertheless marginalize and repress it. However, once it endures subjection to a form "firmly posited by castration," the semiotic subsequently finds its own space in a signifying process which goes beyond the symbolic dominance of the human figure and yet is still capable of representation.

Bellini's artistic development thus begins with depictions of the Madonna and Christ child in which Mary is a phallic mother who is, in some works, seductive, possessive and detached, while being, in other paintings, aggressive and threatening. When one considers these works collectively, one realizes that Bellini ventures through them into a space where autoerotic fragmentation (primary narcissism) meets up with the castration complex (primary repression). On the one hand, Bellini depicts a "mother-seductress" or "possessive mother" whose "precocious, already sexual caresses are more threatening than comforting" (254, 259). Her "Aggressive hands prod the stomach and penis of the frightened baby . . . shift toward the child's buttocks . . . or rest on his sexual members" (254). Bellini thus gives us a visual, figural record of preoedipal anaclisis and autoeroticism, as mother-child contact fragments the infant into erotogenic zones of excitation. Yet the discovery of such organ pleasure, through the creation of a body-in-pieces, is also a source of terror for the child. At the same time, Bellini paints the mother's head, face and eyes so that they consistently gesture towards

an inaccessible elsewhere. He portrays Mary's face in a mood of elusive, maternal self-possession, its gaze luring and seducing the spectator away from her autoerotic embrace towards "an experience that nothing embodies" (254). It is as if the import of depicted events is being observed by Mary beyond the confines of the canvas and its human figures, hence also beyond the symbolic. On the other hand, Bellini produces one painting in which a "'holistic mother' . . . appears as though [her] aggressivity were rising to [her] throat, but in fact, it is the infant that abruptly reveals it when, . . . he grabs her by the neck as if to strangle her--the guilty mother" (259-260). In short, the mother's threatening, aggressive and symbolic hostility are portrayed and simultaneously undermined by the child who turns the tables on her. While depicting the symbolic aspect of the phallic mother, the painting also signals a rejection of the symbolic's dominance as far as depiction of the semiotic is concerned.

From this point onwards, landscapes take on greater significance as Bellini moves away from the symbolic figuration of the phallic mother's conflicted status towards a pure spatialization of this process through colour. Hence the semiotic no longer resides in foregrounded human figures but pulsates through the background as it asserts itself, together with these forms, in creating a second-degree thetic or signifying process. In one sense, "the myth of the maternal figure is nothing but a screen, a foreground, or an obstruction to be broken through" (260). Yet this screen is of fundamental importance, since without this initial subordination to the paternal function Bellini would never have been able to include landscape and colour in his paintings as the closest possible symbolic representation of a non-symbolic, unrepresentable space. In a lengthy yet crucial passage, Kristeva makes this functional reliance upon the (symbolic) phallic mother abundantly clear. Aside from the status of this fantasy as an important concession to the symbolic order it also doubles as an image of the child's early anaclitic relationship

with the mother as a horrible yet pleasurable process of bodily fragmentation. Such dismemberment is thus a source of terror (i.e. castration) and the hybrid horror/pleasure (i.e. autoeroticism):

> It is as if paternity were necessary in order to relive the archaic impact of the maternal body on man; in order to complete the investigation of a ravishing maternal jouissance [i.e. autoerotism] but also its terrorizing aggressivity [i.e. castration]; in order somehow to admit the threat that the male feels as much from the possessive maternal body [i.e. autoeroticism] as from his separation from it [i.e. castration]--a threat that he immediately returns to that body; and finally, in order not to demystify the mother, but to find her an increasingly appropriate language, capable of capturing her specific imaginary jouissance, the jouissance on the border of primal repression [i.e. the semiotic], although always coexistent with, the imagery of full, mimetic, and true signs.
>
> (263)

Kristeva's configuration of the phallic mother, as a conflicted representation of both the symbolic order and preoedipal autoeroticism, will provide an interpretive context for *The Four Zoas*. Of several motifs employed throughout this epic, those of feasting and weaving/unravelling can be read in ways suggested by Kristeva's development of the phallic mother. Hence the dialectic of dismemberment described in Night I between Tharmas and Enion, and Los and Enitharmon, can become a kind of oral incorporation and unravelling in which these various characters insert themselves into a drama of infantile, incestuous and possessive oral greed in conflict with gustatory and textile representations of castration. In particular, Enion and Enitharmon fluctuate between characterizations as either a seductive mother who promotes preoedipal autoerotism, or a castrating agent of the symbolic. Moreover, they often represent

both tendences simultaneously, within the same episode and through the same imagery. Consequently Enion and Enitharmon become poetic incarnations of the phallic mother as a "cleaved space" or semiotic chora ("Bellini" 264). Meanwhile Tharmas and Los take up their own positions within this conflictual dynamic as infants who are orally greedy or fragmented/unravelled due to castration or erotogenic excitation. Moreover, what critics describe as a conflict between passively good and actively evil female figures can now be recast within the context of Kristeva's phallic mother as a configuration of both the seductive and threatening mother. This metaphor of the semiotic disrupts the symbolic structure of gender-coded hierarchies in *The Four Zoas* which are anchored upon Blake's concept of the masculine Human Form Divine. It acts as a metaphor of revolution, much as it does in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, by shattering the patriarchal metaphors articulated as part of the dominant discursive formation.

Abjection

The notions of abjection and the abject are best approached through a consideration of phobia, as initially treated by Freud and developed by Kristeva herself. Freud' s conception of phobia, as a form of neurotic anxiety, traces its symptoms back to the very first anxiety brought on through the process of birth and, implicitly, separation from the mother (*Lectures* 81). When discussing the phobias of small children, he connects this anxiety to a longing for the familiar mother, expressing itself as the fear of being alone and the fear of strangers (*Lectures* 82-83). In this case, anxiety becomes a form of "unconsummated excitation" in which a presumably incestuous libido is aroused but neither satisfied nor employed (*Lectures* 82). The role played by repression in such a direct transformation of libido is one whereby the idea (i.e. incest) becomes distorted and unrecognizable, yet the affect becomes transformed into anxiety. Ultimately, the

threat of castration experienced by the phobic is not an external one, located in reality, but is internal and originates in the libido itself (*Lectures* 84). The phobic, however, manages to transform this internal danger into an external one. The examples of infant phobias chosen by Freud are often those in which libidinal desire for the mother is repressed, while anxiety is expressed in symptoms attached to a substitute for the father. Hence libidinal and incestuous desire, under the pressure of censorship, produces anxiety in the face of a threatened castration by the father perceived as a very real, external situation of danger (*Lectures* 85-86).

For Kristeva, the phobic condition is more complicated insofar as this phobic does manage to connect with the forbidden mother in spite of paternal prohibitions. She begins with her own account of the Freudian scenario. The psychic development of the phobic child begins with the "deprivation felt by the child because of the mother's absence" (*Powers* 39). The sexual frustrations brought on by paternal prohibitions intensify the child's wants to the point of revenge and aggressivity. The child's resulting fantasy of incorporation, in which a portion of the mother's body is held on to, however, becomes reversed because the symbolic content of the fantasy already contains the paternal prohibition as that which makes this content possible as a representation. Kristeva's analysis here echoes her remarks in "Motherhood According To Giovanni Bellini," to the effect that the symbolic assists in representations of the incestuous maternal facet. In the phobic's case, though, the taboo against incest is too strong. Instead of being the one who devours, the child now becomes the one who is devoured as punishment for incestuous wishes. The phobic subject is now put in place of the object and becomes passive, while an entire world of others becomes the active threatening agent of an empty (hungry) and incorporating maternal mouth (*Powers* 40). In short, the phobic child feels threatened by the phallic mother acting on behalf of the paternal function.

In the course of treatment, however, language receives the charge of this conflict between incest and its prohibiton, leading the way to a possible cure. In some of the more famous case histories of young phobic children, such as little Hans, their spoken fear is often accompanied by a remarkable verbal skill. Operating in the shadow of paternal prohibitions, such volubility is viewed as a cross between "narcissistic conversation drive and sexual drive" (*Powers* 34). It is "epistemophilic" insofar as the child wishes to know everything and know himself in such a way that self-knowledge becomes a function of sexual identity. Hence language becomes a fetishistic substitute for the threatened penis and a denial of the possibility of castration. In other words, the symbolic function of language serves what Lacan calls the Law, yet the instinctual drives which saturate language are always capable of finding incestuous loopholes. Little Hans may fear castration but his spoken fear reassures him with the prospect of incestuous contact. With other child phobics, orality becomes a way of incorporating the mother even though such obsessive saying is tinged with the fear of its possible consequences (*Powers* 41). One now fills the mouth with words instead of the mother. Such verbalizing activity becomes

> an attempt to introject the incorporated items. In that sense, verbalization has always been confronted with the 'ab-ject' that the phobic object is. Language learning takes place as an attempt to appropriate an oral 'object' that slips away and whose hallucination, necessarily deformed, threatens us from the outside.
>
> (*Powers* 41)

In one sense, language as a "representative of the paternal function takes the place of the good maternal object that is wanting. There is language instead of the good breast" (*Powers* 45). Yet language is also the good breast in a distorted and unrecognizable way. The phallic mother may seek to castrate the phobic as a

representative of the castration complex but the phobic is also fascinated and drawn towards the fearsome mother whose body, in a sense, becomes more appetizing. Dismemberment and fragmentation are still horrifying and repulsive prospects, yet now some of the body parts in question also belong to the phallic mother as 'object' of desire. But how are these fragments represented?

An account of the therapeutic process for the phobic will facilitate an answer. Prior to treatment and cure the phobic who speaks of fear "utters only by separating" since it is fear of the other, and of the mother, which motivates the phobic into seeking isolation (*Powers* 46). This flight from the mother is simultaneously experienced as a "brutal separation" from her, as a price exacted by the paternal function of the symbolic (*Powers* 48). Hence the acquisition of gender and language for the phobic establishes an excessively rigid barrier between subject and object. The psychic space for a phobic becomes a fear of imprisonment as the "constituting barrier between subject and object [becomes] an unsurmountable wall." This condition turns the ego into a "fortified castle" from which all dangerous maternal sexual currents are exiled (*Powers* 47). Although fortified and cordoned off, the phobic, as a result, suffers from a kind of emotional emptiness. Without any contact between self and (m)other we have this "strange configuration [of]

> an encompassment that is stifling (the container compressing the ego) and at the same time, draining (the want of an other, qua object, produces nullity in the place of the subject).
>
> (*Powers* 49)

But once current begins to flow as the result of treatment and the dynamics of transference, desire rises in such a way that the phobic encounters the mother as abjection:

> It seems to be the first authentic feeling of a subject in the process of constituting itself as such, as it emerges out of its jail and goes to meet what will become, but only later, objects. Abjection of self: the first approach to a self that would otherwise be walled in. Abjection of others, of the other (I feel like vomiting the mother), of the analyst, the only violent link to the world. A rape of anality, a stifled aspiration towards an other as prohibited as it is desired--abject.
>
> (*Powers* 47)

From what Kristeva says, it would appear that phobics suffer from a kind of arrested psycho-sexual development. They are entirely without desire until its initial dawning in analysis, and before they can direct their desire towards sanctioned objects and substitutes they must first experience desire for what is unauthorized (i.e. the mother). It is only after such a long and laborious process of treatment that they can be normalized, making up for lost time by first enduring the emotionally violent eruption of the abjected mother. In short, repressed and outlawed desire must be experienced prior to its domestication in ways which are appropriate without being stultifying. When such an explosion occurs, desire manifests itself as a fascination for that which is excrementitious. This is apparently the only way it can be experienced while under the extreme pressure of the paternal function. Prior to this psychic breakthrough, the phobic's ego is "wounded to the point of annulment, barricaded and untouchable, cower[ing] somewhere, nowhere, at no other place than the one that cannot be found" (*Powers* 47). The massive discharge or abreaction which shatters the phobic's emotional walls is a consequence of freeing the strangulated affect surrounding a traumatic event in the phobic's life (Laplanche 13). Such a breakthrough is never unequivocal since the phobic seeks and desires the mother while remaining subject to the castration complex. On the one hand, the phobic's breakthrough disrupts

the boundaries between subject and object, child and mother, inside and outside, which were erected by the paternal function. Yet the phobic also seeks to shore up the breach in its walls in order to remain uncontaminated by the mother.

The walls which need to be defended are shaped by the contours of the human body. For Kristeva, these boundaries were first established with the help of an authoritarian phallic mother subjecting anal eroticism to the fear of castration. It is the mother who is involved in the early sphincteral training of the child and who exercises an authority on behalf of the paternal function which nevertheless predates the onset of the castration complex. This authority revolves around the mother as phallic woman who threatens the child's anal penis as interpreted by the infant's imagination. Through such training, the child learns to postpone or renounce a direct instinctual gratification out of consideration for the environment. The combination of maternal prohibitions and infantile frustration turns the child's body into a territory composed of areas, orifices, points, lines, surfaces and hollows, all of which are subject to the binary logic of proper-clean/improper-dirty. This primal mapping of the body constitutes a precondition of subjective identity and language, insofar as the rejection of feces maintains the boundaries of a clean and proper body and is also linked by Kristeva to the archaic production of signifiers.

Returning to the phobic's conflicted attitude towards the mother, bodily discharges of feces and urine are abjected as bits of the mother's body so that the phobic can defend his physical territory, yet these very same fragments are not only rejected but desired:

> The body's inside, in that case, shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between inside and outside. It is as if the skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one's 'own and clean self' but, scraped or transparent, invisible or taut, gave way before the

> dejection of its contents. Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up to reassure a subject that is lacking its 'own and clean self.' The abjection of those flows from within suddenly becomes the sole 'object' of sexual desire--a true 'ab-ject' where man, frightened, crosses over the horrors of maternal bowels and, in an immersion that enables him to avoid coming face to face with an other, [i.e. the father] spares himself the risk of castration. But at the same time that immersion gives him the full power of possessing, if not being, the bad object that inhabits the maternal body [i.e. the phallus]. Abjection then takes the place of the other, to the extent of affording him *jouissance*, often the only one for the borderline patient who, on that account, transforms the abject into the site of the Other. Such a frontiersman is a metaphysician who carries the experience of the impossible to the point of scatology.
>
> (*Powers* 53-54)

In spite of his or her fear of the paternal function the phobic still crosses over into the forbidden zone of maternal filth. Yet in doing so s/he also identifies with the father as a function of one's submission to the castration complex. Kristeva gives new meaning to the notion of a borderline patient as someone who exists on this frontier between incest and its prohibition. In doing so, she takes advantage of the ambiguity inherent in Lacan's use of the term "Other" which, as a designation of the unconscious, signifies both preoedipal symbiosis with the mother and subsequent identifications with the father. Hence the conflicted status accorded to the phallic mother, and at work within the verbal dexterity of phobic children, also inhabits the complex dialectics of abjection.

The foregoing chapter has introduced us to Blake's conflicted female metaphor and its interpretation by various critics. While the most persuasive reading of this conflict uses a psychoanalytic perspective, the type of

psychoanalysis has often been reductive in its application. A more appropriate methodology employs a Lacanian approach modified significantly by the psychoanalytic theories of Julia Kristeva. Kristeva's own work can be interpreted as fitting into a particular feminist context valorizing the maternal position as a base of operations from which to subvert a dominant phallocentric discourse of gender-coded hierarchies. Orthodox psychoanalysis not only describes the generation of such a discourse but also codifies it. Yet the disclosure of the unconscious by psychoanalysis, along with its repressed incestuous dynamics, can be used by a feminist revision of Freud as a reverse discourse. Kristeva develops the subversive possibility of such a discourse in *Revolution in Poetic Language* and other works in which this political agenda continues to function in a more muted way. In these subsequent works the importance of the mother as the site of incestuously generated conflicts becomes foregrounded rather than assumed as it is in *Revolution*. Known as the signifying process, this conflictual dynamic erupts in cultural productions to deconstruct the phallocentric hierarchies which are otherwise mediated through them. In particular, Blake's artistic and poetic productions provide us with examples of such a deconstructive process when the phallocentric hierarchy represented by his Human Form Divine is challenged by his conflicted female metaphor as a translation of the signifying process. Moreover, there are historical reasons supporting the application of Kristeva to Blake. These include certain correspondences between the historical role of incest as a metaphor of revolution for the Romantics and Kristeva's mobilization of this metaphor in the guise of an incestuously generated semiotic. In keeping with his own participation in a revolutionary epoch Blake incorporates the revolutionary significance of incest into his own work and thus provides us with an opportunity for psychoanalytic interpretation. Finally there are certain works of art, poetic texts and aesthetic tracts which cry out for this kind of interpretation more than

others. Specifically Blake's opinions on Venetian and Flemish art, as well as the often violent content of *The Four Zoas*, recommend themselves as two places where a Kristevan analysis can be most fruitful. Having traversed the complicated critical, historical and theoretical terrain of the previous chapter, we are now in a position to devote ourselves to these texts.

Notes

[1]My definition of "mainstream" is borrowed from W.J.T. Mitchell's article "Dangerous Blake" in which he describes the "professionalization of Blake studies," "begun by Northrop Frye, as assimilating Blake "into the canon of mainstream English literature" (410). In this sense "mainstream" has two meanings, denoting both a literary tradition (the line of Chaucer, Spenser and Milton) and the critical tradition defined by some of the more important precursors in Blake studies. These latter individuals are identified by Robert N. Essick as "those great buildingblocks of the profession . . . Damon, Frye, and Erdman" ("Blake"397).

The artistic and philosophical principles apparently alluded to by Fox include "the technically genderless tyrannies and nature of religion" (80). The central metaphor under which these tyrannies are known is The Female Will. Frye's original interpretation of this figure still forms the starting point for subsequent treatments regardless of whether or not they agree or disagree. In *Fearful Symmetry* Frye defines The Female Will as the "worship of a female principle, therefore, specifically a maternal principle." As an "independent nourishing force in nature" it is a good mother, providing the artist's imaginative seed, material to work with (75). Located in the maternal and sexual realm of Beulah, such a nurturing principle becomes a danger to the imagination if the artist succumbs to it in a worshipful attitude best exemplified by the cult of the Madonna in Christianity. Ultimately, imaginative creativity should result in the elimination of any external materiality, subsuming all of female nature under a totally humanized vision. Any failure to do this results in the persistence of

nature as "an independent object-world" reducing the imagination to a "helpless dependence" upon it (75). This alienation of the imagination from nature is equated, by Blake, with the fall of a totally integrated and humanized Albion. It also specifically establishes The Female Will as a stubbornly independent nature which not only refuses integration but uses its own remoteness to institutionalize division in forms of sexual, economic, political and scientific relations of dominance and repression. For the details of such a development see my discussion of Blake's philosophy in Chapter Two under the subsection heading of 'Conflict vs. Contradiction.'

Damon concurs with Frye in reading The Female Will as an "evil" form of division in which the "domination of woman" prevails (447). Although unmentioned by either Mitchell or Essick, Harold Bloom should also be included as one of the buildingblocks who likewise identifies The Female Will with "the natural as opposed to the imaginative" (*Apocalypse* 104). Moreover, this "separate Female will" is a "hostile natural force" (*Apocalypse* 212). Finally Erdman agrees with this critical tradition, claiming that females, in Blake, "are not so much people as states of nature" (253-54).

[2]The term use "formalist" is also used in Mitchell's sense to very loosely refer to "aesthetic canons" which see the work as an integrated and unified whole in which the parts are held together by "matrices of tension and ambiguity" ("Dangerous" 410). These formalist practices have, according to Mitchell, "domesticated and sanitized [Blake] in the name of higher sublimations." As such a formalist critic, Frye is closed to "Blake's images of rape, lust, sado-masochism, and other scenes of abnormal sexuality" ("Dangerous" 414). Consequently Frye, in *Fearful Symmetry*, does not see the inherent sexism and potential vampirism of female absorption into a totally integrated human form figuratively represented as masculine. Frye discusses Blake's apocalypse as a "sacred marriage" in which the

"relation of man to nature becomes the relation of the lover to the beloved, the Bridegroom to the Bride" (351, 196). In other words, the Last Judgement, as an imaginative event, signals "the absorption of nature into a fiery city" in which "the whole of reality is absorbed" in a moment of illumination or "surrenders its 'female' or independent quality . . . tak[ing] its form from the will . . . of its creator" (351, 316, 262-63). In one sense the natural world dissolves into the bridegroom of imagination "as part of himself and not as a remote and objective 'female will'" (336). In another sense the objective 'female' part of nature merely "drops out" (75). The female either disappears into "a completely integrated body of imaginative men" figured forth as Man or perhaps becomes a male participant in the "eternal community of men" (128, 351). In any event, Frye's reading yields a Blake whose final vision of integrated wholeness is purchased at the price of a sexist cannibalization of the female or forced gender transformation. The community or brotherhood Blake achieves is thus compromised by the acts of assimilation and exclusion which found it.

Of the other formalist critics already mentioned, Erdman and Bloom superficially explain away any appearance of self-contradiction by proclaiming Blake's Man, an androgynous sexual equality while seeing The Female Will as nothing more than a metaphorical conception of Nature. For Bloom "the female . . . is the natural world and the generative process [while] the male represents the human, both man and woman" (*Apocalypse* 104). Also, in Erdman, females are "states of nature" in opposition to males who "stand for both mankind and womankind" (254). Both these analyses fail to seriously consider the problems which Fox, and other critics to be discussed later, find inherent in Blake's androgyny. Also the attempt to gloss Blake's use of "Man" as a generic reference to the species mankind refuses to admit that one "is subtly supporting a

patriarchal attitude" by using language which, nevertheless, shapes our conscious experience and devalues women (Mellor, "Portrayal" 153-54).

[3]"Beucolic" is borrowed from Catherine Haigney as a "useful neologism" formed by joining "Beulah" with "bucolic" (116).

[4]See the discussion of Norma A. Greco below on the problematic nature of Innocence as a topography presided over by a benign and beucolic mother. Morris Dickstein, who, in many respects, anticipates Greco, describes the irony in these poems as "balanced between a visionary faith in the fortifying strength of innocence and a devastating satire on the psychology of quietistic acceptance and complicity with oppression" (80). Northrop Frye also views the *Songs of Innocence* from an ironic perspective. On the one hand the condition of childhood in these songs "is a state or phase of imaginative existence . . . in which the world of imagination is still a brave new world and yet reassuring and intelligible." On the other hand, "any life or imagination which lingers in Beulah tends to become more helpless and infantile." Although the condition of innocence becomes debilitating if persisted in, the *Songs of Innocence* themselves do not inherently contain this irony but reveal it only when complemented by the *Songs of Experience*. The state of innocence, when compared to that of experience, points to a "higher world" which must not only transcend experience but also use it as a rite of passage through which innocence sheds its childishness but retains a more durable and transforming childlike power (*Symmetry* 235-37). Finally, Harold Bloom's analysis of the *Songs of Innocence* is like Dickstein's in that it finds them to be inherently ironic. The irony which Bloom detects, however, is much darker:

> The purity and wisdom of the child or natural man is for Blake . . . a self-consuming light that momentarily transforms natural reality into an *illusion* of innocence. The human child of *Songs of Innocence* is a

> changeling . . . who cannot recognize his divinity, and whose ministrations entrap him in a universe of death.
>
> (*Apocalypse* 30; emphasis added)

[5]This pattern of active men who intervene favourably to rescue situations can be found throughout Blake's canon. Los, Milton, Orc and the Devil from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are prime examples. Also, Theotormon represents the failure of such a masculine hero to materialize while underscoring the inability of Oothoon, as a woman, to liberate herself without the aid of a man. Moreover, Blake carries this theme over into his visual art in his design known as "The Woman Taken in Adultery." Without knowing it, Christopher Heppner describes this design as a re-enactment of the drama in *Visions*, only this time Christ succeeds where Theotormon failed. In Blake's depiction of this biblical episode, the woman stands "with wrists bound behind her back," a detail which "increases her apparent helplessness, and makes her release more obviously dependent upon another" (49). Meanwhile, she looks expectantly at Jesus's hand, poised above the sand where he will momentarily inscribe "the words that will release her into life" (50).

[6]As Dickstein observes, the speakers of "Holy Thursday," "The Chimney Sweeper" and "The Little Black Boy" end their respective poems with an "enticing platitude that represents common thinking and gives us the illusion of having done with a problem, enabling us to put it aside without dealing with it or even thinking about it" (78). In other words, they are figuratively *blind* to the exploitation which these poems depict. It is one of the functions of *Songs of Experience* to "throw the veil of irony aside and deal[ ] directly with the ruinous results of this false consciousness" (78). Thel negotiates a similar passage from false consciousness and perception to seeing the way things really are. While in the values of Har, she learns from the Lilly, the Clod of Clay and the Cloud that

God will protect and provide for one during a life of self-sacrifice, and also reward one for such a life in heaven. Although life is something of an extended, maternal food chain since "every thing that lives,/ Lives not alone, nor for itself," this transience is meaningful given the orthodox Christian context (*Th* 3: 26-27). Yet when Thel is invited to participate in this life, she discovers the reality of sexual exploitation, manipulation and repression which the Christian innocence of Har conceals and in part promotes. Taken together, *Thel* and *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience* can be read as sophisticated demystifications of an oppressive Christian ideology.

[7]In "Oothoon, Failed Prophet" Mark Anderson compares Milton's *Comus* to Blake's *Visions* in order to foreground the contradictions in Milton's conception of virginity and the way in which Blake seeks to sort these contradictions out. Although bound by Comus's spell, the Lady asserts her mental freedom and thus advocates the *separation* of body and soul. Yet the notion of virginity, assumed here by Milton, *equates* physical with spiritual purity. Understood from a Urizenic and authoritarian perspective, this soul/ body opposition is hierarchical and expresses a relationship of power, subordinating the body to the spiritual demands of purity. Hence physical defilements will not be tolerated and become marks of rebellion and spiritual collapse. In specifically sexual terms, this code transforms female virginity into a syntactical ridge defining women as either virgins or whores. For Blake, this distinction extends the power relationship of soul over body, creating a patriarchal subordination of women to men in which the demand for female chastity is synonymous with a declaration of ownership. In Anderson's estimation, Oothoon seeks to free herself from this Urizenic code by essentially reversing Milton's contradictory relationship between body and soul. On the one hand they are still separate in so far as physical chastity now has nothing to do with spiritual purity. Although raped by Bromion, Oothoon is not his possession

and remains pure, defining this spiritual condition as a mental virginity of intellectual freedom and imagination, uncontaminated by narrow empirical notions of identity. Yet this intellectual freedom is also "metaphorically united with sexual freedom instead of restraint" (10). In this sense body and soul are *equated* at the end of the poem when Oothoon makes "a profession of selflessness and a proclamation of free love" (15).

This visionary reversal of a restrictive moral code is undermined, as far as Anderson is concerned, by Oothoon's continuing infatuation with and dependency upon Theotormon. This becomes clear when she protests her purity and freedom from Bromion's rape by inviting Theotormon's eagles to rend her flesh and expose her pure, transparent soul as a reflection of Theotormon's image. As an extension of Theotormon she is unable to envision herself as a free woman. Also her profession of free love subverts itself as a Urizenic proposal to net and trap young concubines for Theotormon's unrestrained sexual pleasure. Not only are these women captives but Oothoon also suspiciously employs them to wield "indirect power" over Theotormon in keeping with Urizenic sexual codes of coy manipulation (15).

Helen Ellis in "Blake's 'Bible of Hell'" also dwells upon the contradictions of this image of sexual freedom. Citing Blake's intertextual reliance upon the Song of Soloman, Ellis argues that Blake uses the Bible to celebrate a sexuality without shame and employs scripture against the tyranny of its adherents. In *Visions* Blake uses the notion of sexual freedom both figuratively and literally. Figuratively it serves as a metaphor for intense imaginative pleasure obtained through freedom of the senses from a narrowing empiricism. It is a perceptual and epistemological breakthrough. Yet when employed literally, in terms of Oothoon's non-possessive joy at Theotormon's pleasure in other women, the notion of sexual freedom delivers these women over to the tyranny of the harem (28). Hence

problems arise when Oothoon's offer of women turns Theotormon into a prospective Soloman with his own harem: "Blake's intellectual, visionary purpose is undermined by his choice of figure, of the life of the odalisque as a symbol of feminine fulfillment" (28).

Thomas A. Vogler's "'in vain the Eloquent tongue'" is just as much about readers of *Visions*, who identify with Oothoon and her visionary message, as it is about the poem itself. What readers often take to be her visionary assertiveness does not really escape Urizenic constraint but reinforces it in subtle ways, even in Oothoon's most outspoken protestations. Moreover, readers who cheer Oothoon on are also guilty of cooperating with the powers of repression. As Vogler says: "the critical discourse on the poem and the discursive practices exhibited in it 'reflect' each other . . . as they simultaneously participate in and presume to rise above the matrices of power and knowledge" (275).

A significant example of such complicity on the part of the reader concerns the plate which Blake used alternately as a frontispiece and tailpiece for the poem. It depicts a "stuck scene," which defines the poem from beginning to end, in which the three main characters are frozen in postures of confinement at the entrance to a cave (286). They are observed by a sun which appears to be an eye glaring through an opening in the clouds. Yet another eye observes them from within the cave and *it* belongs to the reader-observer. It is the eye which binds Oothoon to Brominon and is positioned much like the male, voyeuristic gaze assumed in European oil paintings of nudes which transform women into objects, both for other men and the male surveyor inside a woman's mind. Added to this are the sprawled women on plates 1 and 3 who appear to Vogler to resemble the women in Fuseli's *Nightmare*. As "glosses on the passive state of the Oothoon we see bound in the frontispiece-tailpiece" they invite the same "intense scopophilia" assumed

by Fuseli which involves the viewer as a co-conspirator in the subjects' suffering (288).

Vogler's observations though are most provocative when it comes to the issue of Oothoon's visionary proselytizing and the way in which those who champion the eruption of her voice are unaware of paradoxically entrapping her. Beginning with the sublimity of Oothoon's speech, Vogler notes that it is not only caused by a rape but itself constitutes a linguistic, enrapturing rape of the reader. After surveying the historical "psychoaesthetics of rapture" he compares the linguistic experience of the sublime with the cult of Dionysus which offered a form of sexual release to Greek women confined by restricted sexual roles (298). Presumably Oothoon's voice, as a kind of verbal orgasm, constitutes such a release. Yet Vogler is quick to point out that the myth of Dionysus was historically used to impose a liberation "against the resistence of women" (298). Myths, he tells us, are perhaps "the most regulated areas of cultural production" when it comes to sex and politics, and instead of effecting change may support "accommodation in the service of stability" (298-99). This paradoxicality of the Dionysus myth also applies to Oothoon's voice. Keeping in mind that she never really liberates herself or gets liberated, Vogler depicts her as being confined within what can be called an "'ideologically delimited space'" (299). Within such a space Oothoon's voice is given a specific place to vent itself without threatening the stability of the dominant discourse. Remarking that "'the feminine'" has traditionally signified forces capable fo disrupting the symbolic orders of Western discourse, Vogler argues that Oothoon's boosters unwittingly collaborate with the enemy:

> How ironic, if the most effective means of neutralizing the potentially disruptive voice were *to celebrate and affirm it*, to give it a place in the

> economy of discourse where it can speak all it wants, or where what it wants can be spoken for it and through it by the ventriloquating male. (300; emphasis added)

The predominantly Marxist analysis of David Aers, in "Blake: Sex, Society and Ideology" foregrounds many of the passages from *Visions* already cited by the above critics but places them in an economic and socio-political context. Aers, like Fox, Ostriker, Mellor and Webster, also finds that Blake's views on women are open to contrasting interpretations. He explains this contradiction as due to the contamination of even the most rebellious consciousness by the dominant ideology from which it seeks to liberate itself. On the one hand Oothoon rebels against the way in which even the most intimate areas of life are implicated in larger socio-political structures as concrete mediations of social totalities. Her initial address to Bromion contains a condensed analysis of how perception is shaped by socio-economic factors. Specifically a rationalist and empirical epistemology promotes alienation and allows certain class interests to dominate society. Sexuality, like perception, is also made to conform to rigid, hierarchical, economic and ideological institutions like marriage so that its subversive threat may be neutralized. It too bears the stamp (Bromion's "signet") of wider social structures of domination. Hence female subjugation is ultimately a reflection of the prevailing capitalist mode of production. When Oothoon advocates sexual freedom she poses a potential threat to a mode of production seeking to reduce her to an instrument of labour (reproductive and otherwise). It is through her that Blake attacks phallocentric containment and social control.

Yet Aers wonders to what extent Oothoon has also been contaminated by the ideology of the oppressor. Citing Marcuse and Freud, Aers calls attention to the psychological process of identification as a way in which "the repressed internalize the ideology and values of the oppressor" (30). He suspects that Blake

"may have slipped towards an optimistic, idealist illusion in his handling of Oothoon's consciousness" (31). At first Oothoon appears absolutely free of any ideological contamination, yet she later degenerates into a procuress for Theotormon, continuing to reinforce a repressive ideology subordinating women to the needs of male sexual fulfillment. As Aers observes "The libertarianism celebrated here actually reinforces the traditional culture of male discourse which Blake's poem sets out to undermine" (38).

[8]I use "homosexual" in the way in which Irigaray employs the term to denote the fundamental structure of all patriarchal societies as the exchange of women-commodities between men: "Thus the labor force and its products, including those of mother earth, are the object of transactions among men and men alone. This means that the *very possibility of a sociocultural order requires homosexuality* as its organizing principle." ("Commodities" 192).

[9]Whether or not Blake considers Wollstonecraft as an equal, and echoes some of her philosophical positions in his poetry, is a subject of controversy amongst some of his interpreters. Michael Ackland in "The Embattled Sexes" argues that "Wollstonecraft's ideas . . . act as a catalyst in his protracted exploration of embattled sexuality" (172). Ackland, however, is careful to qualify this observation, noting that both Blake and Wollstonecraft "are remarkably similar in their critique of debilitating sexual roles," yet Wollstonecraft's emphasis on "equal access to education" as the route to female emancipation differs radically from Blake's "advocacy of universal promiscuity" (172). Turning specifically to *The Four Zoas*, he reads this poem as being conceptually motivated by Wollstonecraft's "impassioned call for harmony, equality and true friendship between the sexes" (172). Blake agrees with Wollstonecraft and condemns the perversion of relationships generated by restrictive social conditioning. Wollstonecraft, for example, criticizes the creation of women as male projections

who are in turn worshipped while Blake calls these projectons Emanations and criticizes the religious cult of chastity which elevated women in the first place. Moreover, both authors criticize the way in which women, once elevated, are encouraged by the circumstances of their oppression to obtain an illicit sway through the use and manipulation of passions.

Judith Lee in "Ways Of Their Own" also uses *The Four Zoas* as evidence of Blake's indebtedness to Wollstonecraft. Like Ackland she calls attention to the symbiotic, stereotypes of oppression in which men and women tyrannize over each other. The prevailing social conditions subordinate women to men by limiting their education and independence. Hence women are forced by their dependence to become the pleasant and alluring creatures that men wish them to be. Placed in a position of weakness, women turn their liability to good use and employ their beauty, tears and smiles as weapons to exercise some control over their lives and the men in them. The only escape from this vicious cycle is a female independence which Wollstonecraft urges as a period of grace in which *both* sexes can correct their mutual misconceptions before coming together as equals. Moreover, this notion of individual and social transformation "as a two-fold process in which men and women evolve independently but reciprocally" also provides the basis for Blake's myth of regeneration in *The Four Zoas* (133). Hence Blake's Emanations and Zoas reflect Wollstonecraft's notions of interpersonal reform by functioning "as symbols that represent the dynamics of psychological change and as characters who reflect contemporary social attitudes . . . [and] act out problems of outlook and behavior described by Wollstonecraft" (133).

In contrast to those who see him as a poetic mouthpiece for Wollstonecraft's ideas, Blake is depicted by some recent critics as also taking a less enthusiastic view of her. The most intriguing is, perhaps, "An Original Story" by Nelson Hilton in which he uses *Visions* to point out the "psycho-cultural

contradictions within Mary Wollstonecraft" (102). Although Wollstonecraft's writings advocate female independence and non-manipulative behaviour, Hilton believes that Blake uses *Visions* to show how she does not necessarily practise, in her life, what she preaches in her tracts. Thus Hilton reads *Visions* as a commentary on the inconsistency between Wollstonecraft's writings and her love affair with Henry Fuseli. Hilton's brief biographical account of this affair describes Wollstonecraft as a woman whose emphasis upon rationality belies the intensity of frustrated (sexual) needs. Upon meeting Fuseli, however, these sentiments become aroused in a sublimated fashion as a longing to unite with his mind even though Sophia Rawlins, his wife, may continue to claim all rights to his body. Ultimately Wollstonecraft seeks to resolve this situation by asking Mrs. Fuseli if she can become a member of the household and thereby cultivate her "Platonic" relationship with Fuseli on a daily basis. For her part, Sophia is able to read between the lines and denies Mary's unusual request.

Turning to *Visions*, Hilton reads the poem as a transcription of how Blake might have viewed Wollstonecraft's life and work in the context of her relationship with Fuseli. Hence the poem begins with an enslaved Oothoon as a commentary on how Wollstonecraft remains enslaved to her feelings for Fuseli, in spite of what *A Vindication* says about freedom from such slavery to the senses and to men. In this sense Wollstonecraft's/Oothoon's enslavement is initiated and continued by the joint male figure of Bromion/Theotormon who represents Fuseli's split personality as seeming forever in a rage while being, in reality, diffident and shy. Another contradiction revolves around Wollstonecraft's insistence upon the purity of her intentions with respect to Fuseli. Blake's commentary upon this is Oothoon's invitation to Theotormon's eagles to tear open her breast and reveal the purity of her soul. Not only does Wollstonecraft's affair become a masochistic exercise of self-laceration but the image reflected is a masculine one

(i.e. Theotormon's). In other words, the rational purity espoused by Wollstonecraft, as a vehicle of female liberation, is in fact a reflection of patriarchal values. Rather than free her, such reflection will continue to enslave her as a projection of patriarchal society.

Finally, the most interesting contradiction is, perhaps, that which concerns Wollstonecraft's proposal to Mrs. Fuseli that she move in with her and her husband. According to Hilton, Blake transcribes this episode into his poem when Oothoon offers to stand aside in tolerance of Theotormon's promiscuous affairs with other women. Instead of reading this scene as a demonstration of sexual freedom, Hilton believes that it can just as easily be read, in the context of other lines from the poem, as a deceptive and manipulative display of innocence. Oothoon's liberated scopophilia is performed with eyes similar to the solar-eye in the frontispiece-tailpiece which observes the bondage of Oothoon, Bromion and Theotormon. Also, Hilton conflates this text with another reference to the eyes of Urizen as standing sentry duty around the "frozen marriage bed" as the "Father of Jealousy" (*V* 7: 21-22). Through this complex network of biographical and textual references, Hilton appears to give Blake credit for also seeing a subtext behind Wollstonecraft's offer of disinterested cohabitation with the Fuselis. Apparently this subtext accuses the Fuselis of living a passionless and dead marriage while assuming that Mary could do better by Henry than Sophia. Also, Oothoon and Wollstonecraft appear to be equally unconscious of their real motivations which is how Hilton reads Blake's motto about the eye seeing more than the heart can know. In the end, Blake's poem foregrounds the conflicted and split nature of Wollstonecraft's discourse as existing simultaneously on "various levels, or 'folds' of perception: [or] contradictions in the logic of identity" (101). Hilton appears to give Blake credit for understanding language in ways similar to Lacan or Kristeva, in so far as it is structurally split between conscious discourse and the unconscious,

the semiotic and the symbolic. In Wollstonecraft's case, her language may openly profess relations of equality between the sexes based on the cultivation of rational faculties in both men and women. Yet this position also appears to be interlaced with the dynamics of manipulation and seduction that it was meant to reform.

[10]The division of labour betwen Blake and his wife, Catherine, is similar to that existing between Los and Enitharmon, and also suggests that Blake named Cathedron after her. Bentley, in his *Records*, includes an observation made by Frederick Tatham that Catherine, "'laboured upon his Works, *those parts of them where powers of Drawing & form were not necessary*, which from her excellent idea of Colouring, was of no small use in the completion of his laborious designs'" (534; emphasis added). In practice, both Blake and Catherine laboured together on the colouring which must have led to large savings in both time and money (Lister 78-79). One could always argue that Blake's livelihood, as an artist, supported both of them, so the contribution made by Catherine's labour also made good sense from the point of view of efficiency and productivity.

Yet from another perspective one can argue that Blake exploited Catherine's labour power, since she "played the traditional role of the subservient wife in a patriarchal marriage" (Mellor, "Portrayal" 155). As an unpaid domestic servant, as well as unpaid assistant, Catherine provided Blake with a valuable source of free labour without which his productive life would have been severely hampered. His entire enterprise thus presupposed Catherine's traditional subordination. Also it may be tempting to read Blake's method of artistic production, in which he had complete control of the entire process from beginning to end, as a form of non-alienated labour. Yet before one reads Blake as a kind of proto-Marxist, it should be remembered that his freedom rested, in part, on his appropriation of Catherine's own alienated labour.

[11]In *Human Form Divine* Mellor defines Romantic classicism as "an attempt to represent an ideal image, usually the human form, recaptured from heroic human figures depicted in classical sculpture and Greek vase painting" (xvi). Although unattainable for the present the belief is that the ideal really existed in the past and can be regained through passionate effort (110).

[12]For a discussion of the other differences between Blake and Wollstonecraft see note 9 above. Also, Orm Mitchell's "Blake's Subversive Illustrations to Wollstonecraft's Stories" further underscores Blake's differences with Wollstonecraft on the score of rationality, especially when considering the issue of child education. Blake believes that the child comes into the world fully equipped with imaginative vision and, like Rousseau, he argues for the natural development of a child's faculties without any forced growth. Wollstonecraft, however, agrees with Locke in stressing the coercive shaping of a child's mind as a *tabula rasa*. The child should be brought up to adult, rational standards through the use of object lessons of intemperance and self-indulgence. Such an emphasis upon reason, morality and virtue, however, cripples the child's emotion, imagination and sensation. As Mitchell observes: "Blake saw [Wollstonecraft's] emphasis on rationality and her use of the object lesson as destructive of the child's innate visionary capacity, as a way of teaching it to see *with* rather than *through* the corporal senses . . . " (33).

[13]John E. Grant long ago commented extensively upon the "excessively erotic sequence of pictures" in *The Four Zoas* which sometimes touch on the experience of incest (144). The most interesting of these appears on page 42 as a sketch in which "a large woman spanmeasures the penis of a boy who looks up smiling at her" (192). This scene suggests an incest which Webster persuasively supports with her own interpretation of Blake's composite art, oftentimes appearing as an art therapist as well as a literary critic.

[14]At this point it should be mentioned that neither Freudian psychoanalysis nor Lacan's version of it can be inhabited unproblematically and turned against itself by feminist theorists such as Kristeva. One always runs the risk of being repossessed by phallocentrism and taking up a new positon within the symbolic. Moreover, the theoretical situation can become even more complicated as a *tension* between the subversive moves enacted by someone like Kristeva and their continuing susceptibility to the symbolic.

The prospect that one is conflictedly related to the symbolic is already present in Lacan. Lacan is a problematic and ambivalent figure whose style and theory reproduce the evasiveness and duplicity of the unconscious while simultaneously representing his w..d as the father's all-knowing dictum. Theorists like Elizabeth Grosz and Jane Gallop have commented on this aspect of Lacan and Kristeva's relationship to it. In their respective commentaries both critics are aware of how tricky it is for a feminist theorist to take up residence within phallocentrism while simultaneously maintaining a critical distance from it. The extreme difficulty of sustaining this stance is necessitated by the likelihood that the insights and strategic usefulness of Lacan's work, and psychoanalysis in general, are dependent upon what is phallocentric and cannot be clearly distinguished from it. For Gallop, Kristeva successfully maintains her balance within this position by essentially mimicking Lacan's own conflictedness. Grosz, however, argues that Kristeva fails to properly occupy the ambivalent space call d for in a feminist interpretation of psychoanalysis and thus becomes even more phallocentric than Lacan himself.

The question as to whether or not Kristeva's interpretation of Lacan entails her assimilation by phallocentrism assumes that Lacanian psychoanalysis is itself unequivocally phallocen.ric. In *The Daughters' Seduction*, Jane Gallop challenges this assumption through a discussion of Lacan's *Seminar XX, Encore* in which she

concentrates on his seminar style. Lacan postures as the subject presumed to know while giving a seminar seeking an answer to the question "What does woman want?" As Gallop observes: "Lacan derives a phallic enjoyment from his lectures, where everyone adoringly takes down his every word as if it were The Word, the Logos which has a phallic fullness, self-sufficiency" (34). Yet Lacan's efforts at answering this question are repeatedly frustrated forcing him to enact the realization that it lies beyond the phallic power and authority of discourse to rationally grasp it. Hence his use of the title *Encore* and its double meaning, calling "both for a repetition of the phallic performance, and for more, for something else" not yet included in the previous recital (35). Lacan's performance indicates that he is in hot pursuit of an answer to the question of feminine sexuality and implies his eventual success. Yet the necessity of repeated phallic performances belies the very pretentiousness and failure of his efforts to articulate this beyond, this feminine something else. Lacan's performance thus struts and stumbles on the frontier between phallic virtuosity and farce. Moreover, the extreme theatricality of his posturing, in which he constantly belittles and insults his audience, is so outrageous that it foregrounds its own arbitrariness and illegitimacy. His style may be imperious but it simultaneously asks the audience to see that the emperor has no clothes.

Kristeva rehearses the same Lacanian moves with the same effect. In a discussion of Kristeva's concept of motherhood as portrayed in "Stabat Mater," Gallop observes how Kristeva's own experience of maternity is beset by conflictedness. On the one hand Kristeva speaks from the mother's position with authority as someone who has had the experience. Yet what she says from this position of power contradicts her appearance as the subject presumed to know. Instead of disclosing the essence of motherhood, Krsiteva's speech admits that "Words . . . re always too distant, too abstract, for this underground swarming"

("Stabat" 162). Rather than unequivocally confirm her position, Kristeva denounces it as vacant since her subjectivity is fragmented by a mysterious heterogeneity which she neither understands, commands nor is in a position to represent. Much like Lacan, Kristeva speaks lucidly and authoritatively from a position while simultaneously exposing the fraudulence of doing so. As far as Gallop is concerned, Kristeva occupies a conflicted space of continual tension between phallic authority and a perpetual tendency to dephallicize it. She also calls upon us to join Kristeva in exploring this space while confronting "the problem of whether the maternal is conservative . . . or disruptive . . . and uncomfortable as it is (precisely because it is uncomfortable) we must try to sit on the horns of that dilemma" (*Seduction* 129).

Grosz also begins with Lacan's conflictedness and interprets it as a twofold task for feminist theorists who must confront both the form and content of his work. One must not only exploit what are, from a feminist perspective, more progressive aspects of his theory; one must also go on to question its overall, phallocentric conceptual frame. Grosz does credit Kristeva with maintaining some of the more subversive aspects of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Chief among these is a faithfulness to the implications of Freud's theory of the unconscious as a radical alterity within the subject, undermining the position of a transparent and unified conscious self-mastery. Lacan's notion of the split subject challenges the humanist assumptions of our culture which arguably valorize masculine traits over and above their feminine counterparts. Yet Grosz claims that Kristeva's use and modification of Lacan amounts to little more than an alternation or internal adjustment of a phallocentric structure which remains intact and unquestioned. Although Kristeva revises Lacan in the ways outlined in the main body of this dissertation, Grosz still believes that she "relies upon Freudian and Lacanian concepts of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and maternity" (160).

One aspect of psychoanalysis which Kristeva apparently does not question is its status as an "historical order of male self-representations" establishing masculinity as a paradigm of which femininity is a sub-standard reflection (172). A woman is just a man minus all-important phallus which is predominant in both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In other words, a woman's subjectivity is a function of her desire to capture the phallus through the experience of motherhood, compensating for her lack by producing a male child as phallic substitute. Possession of the phallus thus becomes the psychic landmark according to which a woman positions her own identity. Grosz seems to assume that a feminist revision of psychoanalysis should provide a theory of feminine subjectivity free from traditional dependencies on the phallus. Moreover, it should generate identities or roles for women which clearly differentiate them from men. Any theory which fails to provide for the construction of such alternative identities, in her estimation, automatically leaves women no other option but subordination to the phallus. According to Grosz, this is what Kristeva does. Kristeva's version of the split or decentered subject caught up in the conflict between semiotic and symbolic can be either a man or a woman. Even maternity cannot be used as a unique model for alternative feminine identities. Kristeva valorizes a maternal space which is beyond subjectivity since the mother, during pregnancy, is psychically projected back into a pre-subjective symbiosis with her own mother.

In making these criticisms Grosz loses sight of what Gallop emphasizes, that the split subject is itself an alternative to phallocentric constructions of identity. Grosz also seems to forget her earlier observation that Kristeva, like Lacan, advances an anti-humanism which undermines the inequalities presupposed by gender identity. Rather than constitute a concession to phallocentrism, Kristeva's refusal to define a specific identity for women is a potentially liberating gesture. Paradoxically, it is Grosz's insistence that feminist psychoanalysis

provide identities for women which runs the risk of reinscription within the symbolic. Finally, if Grosz has in mind some kind of 'identity' which differs from that ordinarily defined as a function of the phallus, it is hard to see how it could substantially differ from what Kristeva already provides us with as a 'subject'. Grosz argues for a female identity which exists in its own right outside of the phallic representations which have hitherto obscured it. In rehearsing the arguments of Luce Irigaray, she affirms a concept of female subjectivity which need not engage the phallus as is the case with Kristeva. Yet, in a very subtle way, Grosz's valorization of Irigaray can potentially fall into the trap of privileging this position and elevating it as a comforting representation so that it becomes frozen into a new *authoritative* position, a new (phallic) truth. Strange as it may seem, one could argue that Kristeva's problematic relationship to the phallus protects her from this affirmation of a 'pure' feminine subjectivity. Moreover, Grosz's account of how this pure femininity shows itself requires that it exceed, overflow and rupture phallocentric linguistic structures. In this sense it presupposes the symbolic and exists in a condition of conflict with it much like Kristeva's conflicted subjectivity. In the end it would appear that one must negotiate an uneasy cohabitation with the symbolic. Grosz's criticisms of Kristeva therefore seem somewhat unrealistic.

[15]Kristeva borrows the term 'chora' from Plato's *Timaeus* where it becomes translated as Receptacle. For Plato the Receptacle is the "nurse--of all Becoming" and functions much like a mother's womb as it nurtures a fluid indeterminacy into a definitive shape (Cornford 177). For Kristeva's purposes, it serves as a useful metaphor describing a perpetually shifting condition in which shapes are moulded, melted and remoulded in a crucible from which delimited shapes eventually emerge. Kristeva interprets Plato's metaphor psychoanalytically. Whereas the Receptacle is a pre-Euclidean amorphous space

which eventually produces geometrical shapes the chora is a preoedipal rhythm whose energy becomes frozen into delineated psychic *Gestalts* and fixed, individuated subject positions.

[16]The following discussion of the 'letter' condenses Anika Lemaire's account of S. Leclaire's book *Psychanalyser, essai sur l'ordre de l'inconscient et la pratique de la lettre.*

[17]Kristeva's modifications of Lacan include her focus on the preoedipal mother-child relation which is also chronologically prior to the mirror stage. By foregrounding a phase of development which remains somewhat obscured in Lacan, Kristeva also posits a continuity between the mirror stage and the onset of the castration complex. This connects the imaginary and the symbolic into one thetic formation whereas Lacan would insist on a more definitive break between the two. What this effectively does is change Lacan's symbolic, transforming it into an extension of the conservative and comforting tendency towards closure and wholeness represented by the imaginary. Otherwise the symbolic, for Lacan, disrupts this closure through the dual activity of separation and mediation, severing the child from his or her image while providing substitutes for it in and through language which presupposes this radical separation. By reconstituting Lacan's symbolic, Kristeva makes her version of the mother-child relationship the sole repository of subversive potential.

[18]The reader of this passage from *Milton* might be struck by the apparent incongruity of using the biblical land of Canaan as a location for a fallen, female topography. As Damon observes, it is "the land which the Lord promised his chosen" and thus "symbolizes the ideal home" as a place of spiritual regeneration. Yet Damon qualifies this uniformly positive notion of Canaan by also claiming that it is, in Blake, "(more often) that state which the Individual *thinks* is ideal. He may be mistaken." In this case, prior to an act of imaginative transformation,

"it symbolizes the unregenerated heart" (67; emphasis added). Consequently, the land of Canaan is conflicted in keeping with the duality of the vortex which transports individuals to and from it. It can be a deceptive "World of deeper Ulro" or a resurrected "Heavenly Canaan" (*M* 9: 34; *J* 71: 1).

In keeping with Hilton's analysis of the vortex as suggestive of the phallic mother is Canaan's reputation as a pagan country practising child-sacrifice. For Damon, the use of children as "Human Victims" (*J* 63: 31) constitutes a "perversion of the maternal instinct" (68). Thus the "Daughters of Albion" as "Breeding Women" parade themselves "Before the Kings of Canaan: to cut the flesh from the Victim/ To roast the flesh in fire: [and] to examine the Infants limbs" (*J* 68: 32,36,57-58).

CHAPTER TWO

SELF-SUBVERSION IN BLAKE'S AESTHETIC THEORY

Blake, Abjection and the Pharmakos: An Introduction

Blake's aesthetic theory is clearly articulated along the lines of several binary oppositions. These include such binaries as the distinction between clean, unbroken figural outline and the blurring of all such delineation, as well as differences between permanence and impermanence, the spiritual and the corporeal, the body and the corpse, cleanliness and filth; and finally, water colour and oil. Of all these oppositions, there are two which repeatedly occupy the center of his aesthetic observations. These are the opposition between clear delineation and its blurring as it relates to the difference between water colour and oil. Moreover, whenever Blake constructs one of these many oppositions, the former term is valorized and aligned with the neoclassical practice of Florentine and Roman Renaissance art while the latter term is marginalized as a feature of the more painterly tradition of Venice and Flanders.[1] Blake champions the work of Michelangelo and Raphael while maligning the unoriginal and mechanistic production of Rubens, Correggio, Rembrandt and Titian. Aside from distinguishing between artistic camps, Blake also extends his analysis into the realm of poetry where Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare dominate at the expense of such, in his view, monotonous versifiers as Dryden and Pope.

In the current climate of linguistic and cultural analysis, Blake's approach to these traditions of art and poetry appears rigorously logocentric and influenced by the concepts of Western metaphysics. Blake's aesthetic theory rehearses the moves we have come to expect of logocentrism, erecting a dichotomous conceptual

structure of superior and inferior terms. In this section, I will argue that this characteristic of Blake's aesthetics is inseparable from the valorization of the male and the marginalization of the female which other critics have documented as a major tendency in his work. Consequently I am in agreement with a certain feminist appropriation of Derridean analysis which sees the binary oppositions structured by Western metaphysics as gender-coded. According to these writers, the male/female opposition is *the* organizing metaphor of metaphysics, informing its vast array of conceptual hierarchies. As Cixous maintains at the beginning of *Sorties*, we are always dealing with "the same metaphor . . . wherever discourse is organized" (63). Hence, the evidence of Blake's misogyny, cited by Fox, Ostriker, Mellor and Webster in the previous chapter, can be attributed to his participation in this logocentric tradition which also doubles as a phallocentrism.

Nevertheless it is not immediately obvious how Blake's aesthetic theory is also symptomatic of his conceptual phallocentrism. This connection becomes more apparent when we consider how his theory is accompanied by metaphors of the body and bodily functions. Blake's emphasis on the body's formally clean delineation is almost always couched in terms of a defence which excludes oil painting, and those who practise it, as a diseased and excrementitious danger to be cast off as one would cleanse the body of infection and filth. Taking this collection of metaphors as my point of departure, I suggest that Blake seeks to marginalize a female and maternal abject whenever he attempts to purify both himself, and art in general, of an excrementitious artistic practice. By employing Kristeva's analysis of the linguistic and psycho-social phenomenon of abjection, it is possible to construe Blake's logocentric rejection of certain artistic traditions as a rejection of the maternal position and all of the cultural metaphors homologous with it. Blake's aesthetic theory thus can be said to practise an exclusionary form of abjection as an aesthetic and cultural enactment of the castration complex and the

taboo against incest. Yet as abjection reintroduces an incestuous, maternal facet in the very act of expulsion, so too does Blake's aesthetic theory enact a similar conflict when its binary of "clean" versus "filthy" art is simultaneously affirmed and deconstructed.

The theoretical approach which I am taking in this section is thus one which combines the insights of both Derrida and Kristeva, although the Derrida I am using is highly feminized. The point where they intersect most fruitfully is through the conceptual affinity shared by Kristeva's abject and Derrida's *pharmakos*. As we have seen, the abject is excrement, urine and menstrual blood which horrifies and repulses. It is a source of pollution and poison which must be purged in order to protect the clean and proper body. Not only is such cleansing necessary to safeguard the integrity of the speaking subject, but holding the line against bodily infection also establishes an important syntactical ridge protecting the territory of the body politic. In making this observation, Kristeva draws on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas, analyzing the relationship between secular filth and sacred defilement. In the context of religious purification rites, 'filth' becomes crucial to the symbolic system of any culture. These rites appear as an "essential ridge" demarcating societies along the lines of basic binary oppositions (Kristeva, *Powers* 65). Simply put, dividing lines are erected through the exclusion of filth promoted to the ritual level of defilement. It is the abjection of filth, or that which is considered to be filthy, which protects the integrity of each social group or subject. Kristeva, however, revises Douglas and elaborates upon her theory by giving the anthropological data a psychoanalytic orientation. For Douglas, the human body acts as a microcosm of the larger social phenomenon of abjection. It becomes "the prototype of that translucid being constituted by society as symbolic system . . . or simply as metaphor" (Kristeva, *Powers* 66). As a syntactic boundary or margin of a subjective as well as a social order, abjection

(like the prohibition of incest) makes the individual identity of both possible. We have already seen this on the subjective level with respect to fecal matter continually separating from the body through a process of "permanent loss." Through such a process the body ensures its autonomy and integrity by rejecting the mixtures and alterations of decay which run through it. Psychoanalytically these anal rejections repeat "a more archaic separation (from the maternal body) as well as the condition of *division* (high-low), of discretion, of difference, of recurrence, in short the condition of the processes that underpin symbolicity" (Kristeva, *Powers* 108). The elimination of fecal matter and filth (i.e. defilement) are thus homologous with the prohibition against incest, and together structure cultural binary-oppositions while maintaining the cleanliness and integrity of the (gendered) speaking subject as well as the state.

Kristeva's argument that abjection has "no other goal than the survival of group and subject" reworks much of the material found in *Revolution in Poetic Language* into a predominantly cultural and religious context (Kristeva, *Powers* 68). As a representative of the castration complex, abjection establishes and maintains the symbolic order as a system of linguistic and kinship structures underlying the security of social units such as the family and the individuation of their constituents. The abject is thus psycho-socially overdetermined as a representative of the mother from whose incestuous embrace one must be separated in order to ensure the survival of a culture dominated by the Name-of-the-Father. While *Revolution* discusses this process in mainly psychoanalytic terms, *Powers* dwells more on the significance of religious rituals of defilement as agents of the symbolic. Implicit within this comparison between the castration complex and abjection is the assumption that the abject, as a version of the semiotic, can also serve as a revolutionary force. Like the semiotic, the abject can also find its way back into the symbolic as a subversive and destabilizing

influence on both the subject and state. Once we realize the latent, reactionary nature of Blake's aesthetic theory, the revolutionary potential of the abject will become more apparent.

The *pharmakos* shares the same characteristics as the abject insofar as its function is to protect the security and purity of the city state in a ritual which also purifies individuals chosen as scapegoats. In its capacity as scapegoat, the individual *pharmakos* must be ritualistically purged and driven away in order to protect the city from being contaminated and invaded by the calamity, famine or poison which the *pharmakos* is designated to represent. Just as rituals of defilement or abjection secure social boundaries, so too the sacrifice of the *pharmakos* maintains the integrity of the state's borders. Kristeva chooses Oedipus as the prime example of the *pharmakos* who "must *exile* himself, leave the proper place of his sovereignty [and] thrust defilement aside so that the boundaries of the social contract may be perpetuated at Thebes." Moreover, Oedipus is "a being of abjection and a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement." By being spatially driven from the city, the *pharmakos* simultaneously has its own body purified. This often takes the form of ritual beatings meant to purge impurity from the body of the *pharmakos* in much the same way as abjection defends the integrity of the body proper as well as the body politic. In the case of Oedipus, such purification of the individual scapegoat takes the form of his self-blinding "so as not to have to suffer the sight of the objects of his [incestuous] desire." As a representation of the castration complex, this blinding restores Oedipus to the dominance of the Law by "reinforcing the boundary that wards off opprobrium" (*Powers* 84). Hence both concepts entail the tracing of a firm bounding outline around individual and social entities, differentiating clearly between an inside and an outside in order either to purify the inside of contaminants it already contains by exiling them outside, or to defend

against those dangers which threaten from without. In the sections which follow, it will be shown how Blake's aesthetic theory reproduces many of these moves, emphasizing the role of precise delineation in protecting the Human Form Divine from possible infection or contamination. This stress on unbroken outlines also has political implications, as indicated by the subversive potential of the abject/*pharmakos* mentioned above.

Another similarity between the abject and the *pharmakos* is the way in which their respective valorizations of the inside over the outside are gender coded. Abjection seeks to expel the mother on behalf of a patriarchal symbolic order whose paternal metaphors organize society as a system of exchanges in which women circulate between men. In other words, the prohibition of incest sets up a system in which maternal substitutes are given and taken as a way of transferring power and wealth from one generation of men to the next. The *pharmakos* repeats this subordination of women, in its own way, by functioning as a female configuration or metaphor, similar to other conceptual substitutes for the feminine which have been scapegoated throughout the history of Western metaphysics. The several hierarchically arranged binary couples cited by Cixous, which distinguish different phases of Western thought, are all gender coded in such a way that the female, inferior terms are marginalized in much the same way as the *pharmakos*. They too must be expelled in order to maintain the uncontaminated dominance of their masculine counterparts. Cixous thus observes that "*Shut out of his* system's space, *she* is the repressed that ensures the system's functioning" (*Sorties* 67; emphasis added).

Both the abject and the *pharmakos* , moreover, are involved with notions of linguistic purity. By maintaining the integrity of the speaking subject, abjection ensures the subject's accession to language by providing the subject with its position within the linguistic order *as* subject. The ability to make syntactical

distinctions between subject and object goes hand and hand with the differentiation between self and other created, for the first time, by the paternal interdiction of the mother-child dyad. The syntactical purity of linguistic structures is thus maintained by the Law of the prohibition of incest, simultaneously establishing clear demarcations between subject and object, mother and child. The *pharmakos*, on the other hand, is also identified with writing as part of a logocentric program ensuring the primacy and purity of speech. Although there is less of an obvious correspondence here, between Kristeva and Derrida, than one finds when otherwise comparing the abject and the *pharmakos*, I will argue that the structural and linguistic similarities become more pronounced once we consider abjection and the *pharmakos* as vehicles of symbolic purity which, nevertheless, subvert themselves and the metaphysics of presence enshrined by speech as a first order signifier valorized over writing.

This conflicted aspect of both the abject and the *pharmakos* can best be explained with the help of Alice Jardine's concept of a *gynema* as a space in which woman-as-verb or woman-in-effect disrupts the master discourse of phallocentrism, creating a crisis of legitimation throughout western culture. Jardine analyzes, through a comparison of their treatment of hysteria, the way in which both Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction participate in what she calls a gynetic-effect as a particular kind of gender undecidability. The gender confusion evidenced in the symptoms of some female hysterics is used to identify the gender undecidability of specifically "female" spaces articulated by both Lacan and Derrida in their respective theoretical fictions. What Lacan refers to as feminine *jouissance* and what Derrida refers to as the hymen are both characterized by a kind of bisexuality which upsets all attempts at gender hierarchization. In short, both Lacan and Derrida examine the way in which elements placed in the "feminine" or inferior position of Western phallocentric

binaries refuse to remain there. Whether they are identified as the "mother," the *pharmakos* or writing, they erupt, creating, in the process, a specifically "female" space in which all phallocentric hierarchies are pulverized, scrambled or rendered undecidable. The "father," the pure and speech can no longer maintain their positions of dominance in the wake of this gynetic-effect. It is important to remember that these disruptions occur primarily through language and in texts, making Lacan's female hysteric or Derrida's hymen metaphorical designations for broad socio-cultural processes. Hence Lacan takes the clinical, bisexual fantasies of female hysteric patients and turns them into a metaphor of a linguistic, socio-cultural dynamic. Likewise, Kristeva's abject serves as a "maternal" metaphor for a homologously repressed element which returns through cultural productions to destabilize a phallocentric ideology of dominance, thereby creating a cleaved, bisexual, hysterical or undecidable space.

A glimpse of how such a space might work can be had through a brief reading of Blake's "The Mental Traveller." This poem narrates a cycle in which a male and female figure exchange positions of dominance and submission while executing this exchange through a dialectic of mutual dismemberment and incorporation. In many respects the dialectic engaged in by the couple in this poem anticipates the mutual evisceration practiced by Tharmas and Enion from Night I of *The Four Zoas*. Early on in the poem "the Babe" (l.5) is given to a "Woman Old" (l.10) who "nails," "binds," "pierces," and "cuts" his body in a horrific ritual suggesting crucifixion and human sacrifice (ll.11,13,14,15). Catching "his Shrieks in Cups of gold . . . She lives upon his shrieks & cries" implicitly cannibalizing the infant while dismembering him as "her fingers number every Nerve" (ll.12,19,17). Consequently she literally consumes the boy's youth, growing young while he grows old. Female blood-lust, however, is only one half of the dynamic vampirism which motivates the poem as an ongoing cycle. Towards the

end of "The Mental Traveller" the male infant becomes a "blind & age-bent" (l.55) old man who takes possession of the old woman-turned-child in order to consume

> The honey of her Infant lips
>
> The bread & wine of her sweet smile [and]
>
> The wild game of her roving Eye. . . .
>
> (ll.69-71)

He now "grows/ Younger & younger every day" (ll.73-74), becoming a "wayward Babe" (l.85) once more while the female child, in turn, becomes a "weeping Woman Old" (l.86). Both male and female move in opposite directions from one chronological extreme to the other as part of a cyclical pattern whose end is also its beginning. Yet the temporal pattern of this cycle is driven by the mutual feasting of its participants who together enact an interchangeable supremacy between male and female components.

We have already seen how the abject is involved in both the observance of the taboo against incest *and* its transgression. In some respects the abject, therefore, corresponds to what Kristeva in *Revolution* describes as the signifying process. The dynamics of the chora erupt to create a heterogeneity between an incestuous, anal sadistic facet and the symbolic which reminds one of the conflicted status of the abject. Most frequently this alterity erupts in the rhythm and syntactical irregularities of poetry. Yet, as Kristeva's discussion of Bellini suggests, it can also display itself visually through the use of colour in painting. In conflict with the symbolic, the semiotic erupts in literary and artistic productions, communicating its effects through pigment as well as through sound. I will argue below that this is how the abject reveals itself in Blake's aesthetic theory. Although the semiotic chora, in Bellini's case, gets depicted in the brilliant and vital use of colour in his backgrounds, a similar conflict shows itself in Blake's

painting as a darkened obliteration of figural outline that is better described as abjection.

While both the semiotic and the abject are characterized by conflicts surrounding anality and its incestuous implications, they also differ with respect to where they occur in the chronology of psycho-sexual development. The semiotic is set in motion primarily as a preoedipal and premirror dynamic occurring prior to the thetic phase and the subject's individuation. Abjection, however, occurs as part of a process facilitating this individuation, casting out dangerous transitional matter for the sake of the body's stable delineation. It thus can be said to function either during the thetic phase, as a transitional process leading to individuation (i.e. rejection) or after it, as in the case of the phobic whose subject position remains incomplete even though the thetic break has been traversed by the child. Although Kristeva does not discuss visual art in the context of abjection she does discuss it as the site of a signifying process in which the semiotic erupts into a visual vocabulary of figuration already defined by the symbolic. Moreover, the similarities between signifying process as rejection and the process of abjection makes it possible for us to also discuss visual art as the site of abjection as well. Yet rather than concentrate on colour, such a discussion will focus on the obliteration of figure as a subversion of the symbolic. This is especially true for Blake's visual art theory and criticism given that he seeks to defend an artistic practice associated with the body's figural delineation against another aesthetic characterized as an excrementitious attack upon outline. While the paintings used in this study as examples of abjection are mostly lost, we still have Blake's written observations to go on. As with the case of abjection, Blake's attempt to defend against the excrementitious through expulsion is simultaneously charged as an attraction for it. Hence his exclusive use of water colour, as an agent of

delineation, is reported by him as having the same excrementitious effects of oil in ruining figural delineation.

Corresponding to the conflicted status of the abject, the *pharmakos* is beset by its own ambivalence as both poison and remedy, ultimately undermining any attempts at unequivocally distinguishing between the inside and the outside. On the one hand, one administers a remedy or cure in order to purify or purge oneself of poison, protecting and securing the inside by casting the evil out. Yet in the very act of clearly delineating both inside and outside, this boundary is simultaneously transgressed, double-crossed and turned inside out. This impossible logic of the *pharmakos* is homologous with that of the hymen or the logic of Hillis Miller's para-membrane, both of which create a zone of undecidability by articulating the nondifferentiation of difference and nondifference. A parallel self-transgression occurs in Blake when his aesthetic theory vehemently proclaims the disjunctions outlined by his artistic binaries *without* maintaining the crucial ones of water colour and oil, delineation and its absence.

With respect to abjection, Blake's art becomes the site of a heterogeneous process in which the paternal symbolic and maternal semiotic are co-present. In the case of the *pharmakos*, water colour and oil are differentiated as remedy and poison only to collapse into each other so that Blake's aesthetic theory becomes a hysterical text whose undecidability destabilizes its own gender-coded hierarchies. Consequently, both the abject and the *pharmakos* become useful as a cluster of theoretical concepts helping us to better understand Blake's conflicted notion of the feminine. Taken together, as a kind of theoretical hybrid, they will articulate some of the ways in which Blake seeks to both marginalize and embrace a maternal dynamic at work in his art and aesthetic theory. While expressing his phallocentrism they will also trace the eruptions of a *jouissance* in his text which functions as the return of the repressed semiotic chora.

Phonocentrism and Blake's Sculptural Aesthetics

Before embarking on an analysis of Blake's aesthetic theory as a variety of phallocentrism some other theoretical issues must first be considered. These involve my use of a phonocentric linguistic theory to discuss Blake's thoughts on a visual medium. One could question my approach on grounds advanced by Lessing's *Laocoön*, which assigns distinct realms to both the poet and the painter since "succession of time is the province of the poet just as space is that of the painter" (91). For Lessing, the "consecutive quality of discourse and the simultaneous impact of objects" in space creates a hard and fast distinction between poetry and painting, legislating them to their respective realms of the incorporeal and the corporeal (Carothers 120). Yet Lessing's attempt to distinguish between the visual and the verbal is undermined by his reliance on a notion of mimēsis common to both mediums, regardless of whether or not one imitates nature or the fantasies of imagination. In what follows, I will briefly outline how a visual notion of mimēsis can still function, on a metaphorical level, within a certain way of conceiving language. Based on this revision of mimēsis, I will argue that a phonocentric theory of language can, in a reversed fashion, be applied to a visual medium.

Allen Thiher in *Words in Reflection* provides us with a brief historical synopsis of how the "primacy of the visual" asserts itself in neoclassical, romantic and modernist thought about language and literature. The Horatian doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* has, in his view, a tenacious hold on "the history of Western literature thought in terms of a preeminently pictorial code." Hence poetry becomes a species of painting and a "form of visual presence" reproducing the visual world in terms of an inner visual world created by language in the reader's mind. Goethe is an important figure for Thiher, since he modifies and revises this tradition by displacing the *presence* to be imitated from the outside to the inside.

Goethe may reject the visual as corporeal but still relies on a notion of language as a kind of imitation. He articulates this notion of language through a theory of symbolism in which the symbol is a form of revelation presenting an image of what would otherwise be an ineffable idea. Although one might classify this theory of language as expression, it is still underwritten by mimēsis as representation in which the particular represents the general "'as the living-instantaneous disclosure of the unfathomable'" (3).[2] What the poet 'sees' with the 'mind's eye' is reproduced as iconic revelation in ways which sound similar to Derrida's description of phonocentric linguistic theories dominated by a metaphysics of presence. Properly speaking, speech does not 'imitate' this idea or presence but behaves like Goethe's symbol by being an instantaneous disclosure of it.

What Thiher briefly alludes to in the example of Goethe is a romantic theory of language articulating what Derrida would otherwise claim is the mainstream Western tradition. In order to illustrate this point, one can refer to Derrida's analysis of two characteristic thinkers of phonocentrism who, together, embrace the entire tradition like bookends marking its beginning and its end. In the context of a discussion on Plato's *Philebus*, Derrida refers to the way in which painting is, "in the metaphorical sense of psychic painting, . . . what gives us the image of the thing itself, what communicates to us the direct intuition, the immediate vision of the thing." This kind of psychic painting gives us the "pictorial, imitative, imaginal essence of thought . . . the naked image of the thing, the image as it presents itself to simple intuition, as it shows itself in its intelligible *eidos*" or idea (*Dissemination* 189). Derrida also relates this metaphorical, psychic painting to the *logos* as discourse or speech. Specifically, the *logos* is like painting since

> It functions as a pure indicator of the essence of a thought or discourse defined as image, representation, repetition. If *logos* is first and foremost a faithful image of the *eidos* (the figure of intelligible visibility) of what is, then it arises as a sort of primary painting, profound and invisible.
>
> (*Dissemination* 189)

Consequently speech functions as a kind of psychic painting which is in direct and immediate, intuitive contact with the idea it represents. This interpenetration of speech and painting inaugurates the metaphysical tradition and permeates all of its various manifestations and improvisations. In spite of the fact that Derrida refers to this tradition as a logocentrism or phonocentrism, it is implicitly guided by notions of mimēsis, representation and imitation. Of course, Derrida distinguishes between the metaphorical and literal sense of painting employed by the tradition. It is always painting in its metaphorical aspect as psychic painting which is valorized over and above the literal sense of painting which is "totally incapable of any intuition of the thing itself." Painting in the literal sense is always in collusion with writing in the common sense "since they only deal in copies, and in copies of copies" (*Dissemination* 190). Hence there is a good and bad painting, as there is good and bad writing as well as good and bad imitation.

As the tradition develops, it undergoes certain modifications, the most notable being the beginning of modern philosophy with the thinking of Descartes, who casts subsequent thought in the mold of subjectivity and its interiority. In many respects, Derrida focusses on the phenomenology of Husserl as one of the major exponents of this transposed tradition in the last stages of its adventure. Yet in spite of the almost twenty-five hundred years which separate them, one hears the same philosophical motifs once heard in Plato, reechoed in Husserl's phenomenology. Husserl's notion of the ideality of meaning remains within the orbit of being as presence. Also, the relationship between speech and the "ideal

'ob-ject' which stands in front of" it, is one which is also guided by the concepts of representation, mimēsis and imitation (Derrida "Speech" 53). Speech is characterized in its essence as expression (*Ausdruck*) because it "consists in carrying outside [and] *exteriorizing*, a content of inner thought" (Derrida, "Form" 115). It is an "outward transfer of a sense that is constituted without it and before it" (Derrida, "Form" 116). In describing how this transfer of meaning is made from the inside to the outside, Husserl employs metaphors which are clearly pictorial. As Derrida interprets Husserl, "the pre-expressive noema, the prelinguistic sense, must be *impressed* on the expressive noema." Moreover, the impression of the prelinguistic sense must render a faithful reduplication of it and hence the "expressive noema must present itself . . . as a blank page or a clean slate." As the unified process of impression-expression, speech is also characterized, by Husserl, as a neutral medium without any "determinate opacity" or "refractive power" (Derrida "Form" 117). Although Husserl depicts speech as a diaphanous medium in his *Logical Investigations*, he alters this in *Idea* claiming speech to possess the neutral character of a medium "less that of transparency than of a mirror reflection" (Derrida, "Form" 118). Yet in either case, as *tabula rasa* or mirror, speech is still determined as "*Abbildung* (copy, portrait, figuration, representation)" in its capacity to *picture* the sense it is expressing (Derrida, "Form" 119).

One can see from this brief overview of the metaphysical tradition that phonocentric linguistic theories are always already about such concepts as mimēsis, imitation, representation, portraiture and painting. In fact, speech is itself a kind of painting. Because of these age-old correspondences between the verbal and the visual, one can, I maintain, use a phonocentric linguistic theory to discuss the visual arts. Prior to doing this in reference to Blake, let us see how other critics

have inadvertently commented upon his aesthetics as a visual phonocentrism. This, however, requires that we first briefly consider the features of phonocentrism itself.

Using the opposition between speech and writing as the organizational axis for all other binaries, Derrida refers to the metaphysical tradition as a phonocentrism in which one finds the "absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning" (*Grammatology* 12). A phonocentric approach to language assumes that meaning is an ideal, non-empirical and nonworldly presence, capable of indefinite repetition and representation through either verbal or written signs. As fixed and eternal, this presence functions as a ground and common denominator for the proliferation of derivative signs which arise and dissolve through time.

Associated with the centrality of meaning is the mastery and control it exercises over the signs it generates. In "Speech and Phenomena" Derrida claims that "Ideality is the preservation or mastery of presence in repetition" (9-10). Linked with this idea of mastery is the privileging of voice over writing. Due to its nonmaterial nature and immediate proximity to internal meaning, the voice is something over which the speaker exercises complete control. Moreover, the very possibility of self-consciousness is a function of such control exercised through our being able to hear ourselves speak. In speech we become aware of the interior mental life as a unified dwelling place of meaning. This interiority is brought before consciousness through the transparent medium of a voice which seems to "fade away" once spoken, so that only meaning remains. Moreover, the diaphanous presence of the vocal signifier ensures that there is no temporal lapse or spacing between it and the intentionality of the signified. Meaning and speech are bonded at one and the same time in a fusion which guarantees the purity and immediacy of the signified in speech as well as our control over it. Thus we can

judge the correspondence between what we say and what we intend to say, ensuring that our utterances are voluntary exteriorizations of what we mean.

Hence phonocentrism valorizes speech as a fullness or plenitude of meaning. Its transparency links it inextricably to the ideality of meaning as that which endures and holds sway through time in the living self-sufficiency of its presence. This notion of presence, as an ideal, can be defined more exactly as the possible. This is what enables the ideal to reproduce itself since, as Derrida observes, "absolute ideality is the correlate of a possibility of indefinite repetition" ("Speech" 52). Yet in order to maintain itself as an "openness for the infinite repeatability of the same," presence, as ideality, must also paradoxically be a form of nonexistence or nonreality that does not suffer the limitations of sensible, empirical existence ("Speech" 53). Even though "presence" in an important and primary sense, as *physis*, implies physical presence, phonocentrism after Plato appropriates and transposes this concept. The visual nature of *physis*, as that which appears, gets translated as the view, aspect or pattern of the *eidos* or idea which assures the unity of its indefinite, possible repetitions. In other words, what is at one time a more empirical notion of "presence" becomes used as a metaphor for a nonempirical, ideal realm which is now valorized over and above its mundane predecessor. Along with this shift or transfer comes the appropriation of everything which "presence" as *physis* once stood for. Thus, even though a physical object endures and holds sway for a certain amount of time, its durability or presence cannot compare with the eternal longevity and presence of the idea. Compared to the latter, it is transient and ephemeral. Moreover, this transposition, accomplished by Plato, accounts for the mimēsis inherent in phonocentrism. Finally, it also accounts for certain paradoxes which occur whenever phonocentrism is conceptualized or explained. One of these paradoxes centers around the concept of presence as a nonempirical ideality even though it is

still attached to notions of existence and reality. The other paradox involves the phonocentric marginalization of writing, as a derivative and empirical sign, regardless of the way it still implies a concept of presence. Nevertheless these confusions can be cleared away once it is understood that phonocentrism seeks to detach the notion of presence from its former connections to physical existence even though the break is far from clean .[3]

Having secured speech to the invisible and ideal realm of the living presence, phonocentrism relegates writing to the margins as a derivative and empirical sign which must point to something else for signification because it does not possess the fullness, plenitude and immediacy of meaning possessed by speech. Although writing must ultimately point to the nonempirical presence of meaning, it does not enjoy the proximity of speech to it. Hence it has been traditionally defined as a secondary and derivative sign, and as an imitation of speech. Writing is "phonetic" and attempts to mime speech as the signifier of a phonic signifier and representation of the self-present voice. In the context of mimēsis, it is bad imitation compared to the good imitation of speech. There are other attributes, traditionally associated with writing, which will be considered in the course of this discussion. For the present, however, this differentiation between speech and writing allows us to define phonocentrism as a hierarchical theory of signs, in which the self-awareness of interior mental life, achieved through the mastery of vocal signifiers united to it in a relationship of presence, is inextricable from the valorization of speech, as a first order signifer, over writing. Moreover, this binary opposition organizes a series of other oppositions on the basis of the structure it articulates, a structure, moreover, that also defines our eurocentric metaphysical tradition.

That Blake participates in the tradition of poetry as a speaking picture has already been commented upon by several critics. Frye observes that poetry, in

general, uses words to "form patterns which approach those of painting" and that the "maxum" of *ut pictura poesis* "refers primarily to the integrity of meaning which is built up in a poem out of a pattern of interlocking images." In any given poem "a unified structure of meaning has been built up which can be apprehended simultaneously like a painting." Frye goes on to use Blake's *Europe* in order to demonstrate how "a poem's total meaning is . . . a total image, a single visualizable picture" ("Poetry" 156). Although the poem can be given a lengthy propositional paraphrase, its "poetic meaning" and "total image" is succinctly expressed in the frontispiece of the Ancient of Days ("Poetry" 157). Joseph Anthony Wittreich makes a similar point concerning Blake's language by tracing his prophecies back to the Book of Revelation when understood as a "'multi-media' performance of 'painted prophecies'" (103). This understanding of Revelation, extending through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century and the Romantic period, sees it as an aggregate of forms combining both pictures and words into one composite document. The book's syncretic form is due to the pattern of its transmission as a visionary message from Christ. After John of Patmos receives the vision from Christ, it is given to him in book-form as a way of preserving its initial impact. When John translates this book into the Apocalypse, it takes the form of verbal icons or hieroglyphs which speak by picture as well as by sound. For Wittreich, poets who designate themselves prophets must write in the light of this traditional view of visionary transmission, hence the "profoundly pictorial character of [Blake's] poetry" (108). Given the visual nature of Blake's poetry, one can argue, as Robert Essick does, that the mimēsis he practises reflects the phonocentric conception of speech as a sign in immediate contact with the idea. Essick also calls attention to the pictorial nature of Blake's language by citing him as a maker of what Gombrich calls "'conceptual images'." These are "pictures of what the artist thinks" requiring the reader to 'see' and understand

"the concepts motivating [the poem's] execution" ("Preludium" 7). This implicit phonocentrism of Blake's visual poetry is also suggested by Wittreich's analysis of it as falling within a tradition of visionaries in direct communication with the divine. Frye's analysis likewise situates Blake within phonocentrism, but we shall need to consider Frye's characterization of Blake's poetry as sculpture before making the phonocentric link more obvious. Moreover, an understanding of Blake's attitudes towards sculpture will also involve us in considerations of his complex and ambivalent theory of imitation as well as its practice. In the end, we shall discover that Blake distinguishes between a good and bad imitation as he does between a good and bad sculpture. These distinctions have as their conceptual subtext, the phonocentric difference between writing and speech. Finally, so as not to seem anachronistic, it is important to remember that Derrida's distinction between a good and bad writing is also implicitly articulated by Rouseau, a preromantic writer and near-contemporary of Blake's. Writing in a metaphoric sense is a "living writing" for Rousseau "immediately united to the voice and breath" and thus a transparent medium and "writing of conscience," revealing the interior divine voice of the soul (*Grammatology* 17-18). In opposition to this we have writing in the common sense as mere external husk and dead letter. Thus the phonocentric structure of Blake's aesthetic binaries can be taken as evidence of his participation in a cultural paradigm extant at the time of his work.

Frye focuses on Blake's method of engraving when he metaphorically calls his poetry a kind of sculpture:

> Blake felt that his conception of outline was one which held all the arts together, and his engraving technique does a great deal to prove his case.

> The stamped designs produced by a relief etching on metal, in which the details stand out from surrounding blank space, give us something of the three-dimensional quality of sculpture.
>
> ("Poetry" 153)

Yet there are other studies which suggest that Blake thought of himself as an inspired sculptor in a tradition extending as far back as Greek and Hebrew antiquity. Morton Paley lists, as one of the requirements for membership in this tradition, a lengthy apprenticeship in which an artist "was to acquire a *vocabulary* of classical sculptural forms" to be drawn upon throughout one's creative life ("Wonderful" 174). Such a vocabulary could only be accumulated through years of imitation in which one copied the work of classical precursors, building up a "repertoire of sculptural images" to be used freely later on ("Wonderful" 178). Considering his student days in Par's drawing school, the Royal Academy schools, and his own support for imitation in some of the "Annotations to Reynolds," Blake certainly apprenticed himself to this tradition. Nevertheless, whatever Blake incorporated did not reduce his originality or inventiveness but became appropriated and transformed as part of his own unique style. Exactly what Blake imitated was an alphabet of *pathos formulae*, an artistic concept perhaps best articulated by Jenijoy La Belle:

> A *pathos formula* may be described as a limited range of body configurations and placements of the human form in space which communicates a definable range of mental and emotional states. These *pathos formulae* form an important part of the *language of motifs* in Western art, from the Renaissance to at least the nineteenth century. They are particularly significant wherever the human form is the predominant element, as it is in the work of Michelangelo and Blake. The objective is not so much to discover single sources for every posture, but rather to find

the ways an individual talent first makes contact with this *lanuguage of art* and then changes it into his own *idiom*.

(14-15)

Not only would these *pathos formulae* communicate broad cultural motifs, but they would also, as David Bindman suggests, relate the "intensified expression of mental and physical states" through "a repertoire primarily of emotive or potentially emotive gestures and forms" (92-93). Taken in a phonocentric context, Blake's apprenticeship to his sculptural precursors is a process in which he learns how to speak the langugage of art with his own accent These *formulae* are vocal signifiers on more than just the metaphorical level implied by La Belle's discussion. They constitute a speech because of their immediate relationship to internal mental and emotional states expressed through body type and figure. Although Blake must imitate and copy in order to learn these *formulae*, this is a good kind of imitation. Once Blake internalizes this vocabulary, he improvises upon it in such a way that he is not making a copy of a copy (i.e. writing), but expresses his own direct and immediate visionary awareness through it. Perhaps the best examples of this utilization of the *pathos formulae* can be found in the drawn physiognomy of his visionary heads as eidetic images (see Fig. 4).

In her study of Blake's visionary heads, Anne Mellor draws attention to the influence upon Blake's thought of Lavater's physiognomy and Spurzheim's phrenology. Physiognomy grew out of the widespread eighteenth-century belief "that physical matter, including the human body, is shaped and controlled by invisible spiritual powers" ("Physiognomy" 53). Originally conceived by Lavater, physiognomy has two basic axioms: 1) that one's innate moral and intellectual powers determine ore's outward appearance, and 2) that an observer can therefore judge the character of a person by carefully studying his or her face, features and form ("Physiognomy" 54). Because Lavater located moral and intellectual

Figure No. 4: "The Man Who Taught Blake Painting in his Dreams." Taken from *Drawings of William Blake: 92 Pencil Studies*, New York: Dover, 1970. Illustration no. 63.

faculties in the human head, most of his observations dealt with the shape of the skull and forehead as well as the contours of facial features. Mellor locates physiognomy as "a branch of philosophical idealism" insofar as it believes that "the physical body manifest[s] spiritual qualities" or that "external form . . . reveals . . . internal qualities" ("Physiognomy" 56). Yet her use of phrenology to study several of Blake's visionary heads, neglects their method of composition, and consequently loses sight of the way in which these heads function phonocentrically as speech in direct and immediate contact with ideal origins. When characterized as eidetic images, these heads cannot be considered as a mere collection of learnt forms put together as an external index of spiritual, mental or moral substance. They are not copies of other copies (i.e. copied from *pathos formulae*) but are the direct transcription of visionary states.

In his article on "The Eidetic and Borrowed Image" Joseph Burke defines the eidetic image as having the properties of "optical reality, sharpness of retinal definition, and involuntary appearance" (263). The eidetic image resembles hallucination in that it occupies an intermediate position between sensations and images and is always *seen* in the literal sense (264). Upon being visited by one of these images, Blake is reported to have asked for materials to draw it and on other occasions is said to have sat with pencil and paper ready, in the event of another visitation. As Burke remarks

> there can be no doubt that he saw his visions, and saw them in the forms not of nature, but of art. None of the visionary heads could possibly be mistaken for a life-drawing. They have every stylistic attribute of an invention, to a far greater degree than would be possible in a study of the living model.
>
> (265-266)

Blake's visionary heads are not copies of a living model nor are they assembled, as an aggregate of *pathos formulae*, as if one were to piece together the parts of a physiognomy in order to satisfy the demands of a blueprint for the characterization of feeling. In other words, judging by Burke's analysis, Blake did not have "Spurzheim's phrenological models [or] . . . craniological system" beside him when drawing the portrait of "The Man Who Taught Blake Painting in his Dreams" (Mellor, "Physiognomy" 63). Contrary to what Mellor suggests, he does not appear to use "Lavater's and Spurzheim's physiognomical observations to guide his pencil" as if he were following an instruction manual (62). Instead, what Paley and Burke suggest is that Blake internalized and digested the *pathos formulae* and the principles of physiognomy so that they were lying ready-at-hand when the time came for a direct communication of vision. When Blake had his visions, they appeared to him in the sharply delineated forms and *pathos formulae* studied during his apprenticeship years. What better way for spiritual beings to reveal themselves than in forms ready made for such revelation?[4] Although Burke does not foreground the phonocentric nature of this process, Blake's linear drawings of these linear visions share in the transparency of speech and its ability faithfully to mirror or paint the ideality of meaning.

As has already been mentioned, Blake drew heavily upon the sculpture of Greek classical antiquity in order to acquire a working vocabulary of *pathos formulae*. Some of the more recognizable sources for his own art include the Medici Venus, the Apollo Belvedere and Hercules Farnese. Yet around 1800 or so, Blake began to turn against Greek art, considering it the product of memory and imitation in a more debased sense rather than the result of inspiration and imagination. Under the influence of such people as James Barry and John Flaxman, Blake began to valorize the "statuary of the ancient Near East, stressing its priority to that of the Greeks and Romans" (Paley, "Wonderful" 178). Both

Barry and, to a greater extent, Flaxman had much to say about the superiority of Hebrew art because their artists were "divinely inspired" and because "the principles of architecture embodied in Solomon's temple were dictated by God to the Jews" (Paley, "Wonderful" 182, 192). Caught between his reliance upon classical artistic idioms and a growing admiration for the lost works of Hebraic art, Blake developed "one of the more bizarre artistic theories in the history of art, in which all contradictions are reconciled and only historical probability is sacrificed" (Bindman 96). This theory also constitutes a creative improvisation on the arguments advanced by Barry and Flaxman.

Although any record of Hebraic art is virtually nonexistent, Blake postulates "that the sculpture of the Greeks and Romans was copied imperfectly from the cherubim of Solomon's temple" (Paley, "Wonderful" 180). Inferior by comparison with their divinely inspired Hebrew prototypes, the Greek imitations were nevertheless the best remaining record of the originals. Moreover, a divinely inspired artist like Blake could in a sense use the debased classical copies in order to see through them towards the Hebrew originals. Not only could such artists catch a glimpse of the sculptured forms of Solomon's cherubim, but they could also spiritually intuit the archetypal forms existing in an "eternal present" within the halls of Los (Paley, "Wonderful" 171). These sculptural forms comprise the ultimate source of life and constitute those divine archetypes which ground the immediate, visionary work of any true artist of the imagination. They are the "wonderful originals" (E 521) from which the Hebrews drew their own inspiration and which Blake describes in *Jerusalem* in terms of his own interpretation of Platonism:

> All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
> Los's Halls & every Age renews its powers from these Works
> With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or

Wayward Love & every sorrow & distress is carved here
Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are here
In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years.

(16: 61-67)

Although Blake disparages Greek art, he continues to rely on Greek philosophy as part of his own eclectic mix of Hellenism and the Hebrew prophetic tradition. Ultimately this artistic theory allows him to have the best of all possible worlds. He can continue to make explicit reference to classical *formulae* without sacrificing his claims to inspiration and imagination. If one views classical sources in the right kind of perspective, they are not bad imitations of a superior art form, but fragmentary promptings towards a vision of those forms in immediate proximity with the eternal. It may look as if one is imitating classical antiquity, yet these *formulae* have become transformed by the visionary imagination and are consequently equal in status with Hebrew sculpture. In other words, the imitation of classical *formulae* trains the imagination until a point in time when it takes up residence in the halls of Los and reinvests those same *formulae* with vision, changing them essentially into Hebraic art forms.

The foregoing discussions on *pathos formulae*, eidetic images, visionary heads, and the difference between Greek and Hebrew art can all be comprehended within a phonocentric conceptual model. Blake's training in classical *pathos formulae* found its way into his reception of eidetic images and visionary heads. Burke is quite clear on the immediacy of this relationship between vision and delineation:

> [Blake] did believe wholeheartedly that they were revelations of the spiritual world–that is, true images of eternally living spirits. Such spiritual images appeared to him . . . in a linear form which was clearer than the images projected on the retina of the eye by natural objects. (266)

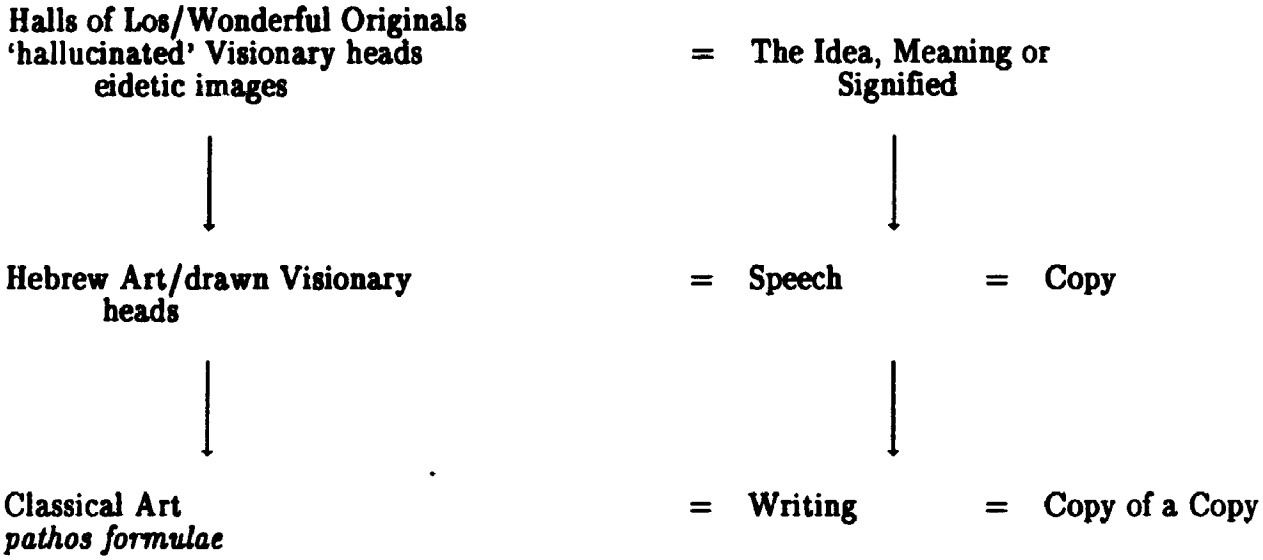
Our discussion of the relationship between Greek and Hebrew art, as conceived by Blake, gives us an insight into the complex dialectics between delineation and vision. Blake's eidetic images came to him in the delineated format of classical *pathos formulae* because they were specifically suited as the lineaments of intense emotional and spiritual states. Yet what made them particularly appropriate was not their connection with classicism, but their deeper relatedness to the sculptured and delineated ideal archetypes in the halls of Los. Blake's training in *pathos formulae* made it possible for him eventually to have direct access to these archetypes and represent them in delineated forms, like his visionary heads, which, in his estimation, were on a par with the lost originals of Hebrew art. Because of their immediate proximity with the imagination and the sources of vision (halls of Los), these visionary heads are homologous with speech and its relationship to the ideality of meaning. Likewise, the products of Greek classicism are reduced in status as copies of superior copies and become a kind of writing. They may possess the delineation of the Hebrew originals, and other visionary works, but this is like the phonetic quality of writing which can only imitate speech but does not share its proximity to meaning. If the classical *pathos formulae* still function like speech in their capacity to express emotional and mental states, it is only because they are still energized and supported by the pure speech of their Hebrew originals (see Fig. 5).

Finally, to briefly anticipate developments later on in this study, one can argue that Blake's sculptural method of engraving his poems is also influenced by

the assumptions built into his adherence to *pathos formulae*. Engraved poems are thus a kind of authentic speech in immediate proximity to the inner sources of vision. With unengraved poems like *The Four Zoas*, however, this proximity is lost and writing deteriorates to a transitory and decaying parody of its visionary counterpart. The consequence of this for *The Four Zoas* is that it becomes a disorganized and degenerate mass of conflicting scripts, revisions and incomplete illustrations. As a writing exiled to the exterior of the body, it takes on the body's tendency to fall into a condition of decay and corpse-like abjection. The abject condition of the poem's appearance is evidence suggesting the presence of an excess of affect which makes it impossible for Blake to finish the poem by engraving it and thus reaffirm the phonocentric hierarchies assumed by the engraved format. In other words, the poem's abject appearance is symptomatic of inherent conflicts which destabilize its symbolic presuppositions.

Assisted by other critics who have discussed various aspects of Blake's aesthetics, the above discussion has attempted to show how his notions of sculpture can be articulated with the help of a phonocentric linguistic theory and its inherent reliance on the concept of mimēsis. In what follows, I shall continue to use this phonocentric theory to discuss other aspects of Blake's aesthetics especially as they relate to the central role played by the firm, bounding outline. The importance of delineation has already been introduced by way of its connection with the scuptured archetypes in the halls of Los and its reproduction in visionary works of art. This valorization of the bounding outline, however, marginalizes more than just a certain derivative conception of Greek classical art. It is also involved in the abjection of other artistic practices which are psychoanalytically charged as representatives of the mother. Prior to considering this aspect of Blake's aesthetic theory, a further elaboration of phonocentrism is necessary, explaining in greater detail the nature of the *pharmakos*.

Figure No. 5



The terms of Blake's sculptural aesthetics arranged according to their subtextual phonocentric order and its inherent reliance upon the notion of mimēsis.

Blake's Contradictions As Opposed to His Conflicts

One of the characteristic ways in which phonocentric theories get articulated by various thinkers in the logocentric tradition includes a fear or paranoia over the possible corruption of speech by writing as a form of disease, contamination or madness capable of subverting conceptual hierarchies and the social body which they legitimize. This danger can already be sensed in Blake's account of the relationship between Greek classical sculpture and its Hebrew origins. Strictly speaking, Blake seeks to give priority to Hebrew art and to marginalize Greek classicism in much the same way as one would valorize speech over writing. Yet this hierarchy is threatened by the somewhat convoluted logic used by Blake in constructing it. Even though his aesthetic practice is rooted at the level of technique, in a classical tradition, he conceptualizes this tradition as a derivative and subordinate art form within the context of his visionary hierarchy. The sculptural outlines studied as Greek, classical *pathos formulae* are, nevertheless, *simultaneously* held to be immediate and transparent representations of a visionary source when drawn or engraved by an artist in an inspired frame of mind. This cohabitation, within one and the same linear form, of the primary and the derivative, creates an ambivalent and *conflictual* dynamic. As derivative representations of Hebrew art, classical *pathos formulae* mingle with their visionary origins to the point where they become practically indistinguishable from them. Such virtual identity between two otherwise separate elements sets up a specular dynamic in which one can be easily substituted for the other, yielding a process in which technique changes place with what technique purportedly represents. Moreover, this specular undecidability reproduces what Derrida understands as writing's threatening usurpation and contamination of speech:

> What is intolerable and fascinating is indeed the intimacy intertwining image and thing, *graph*, i.e., and phonè to the point where by a mirroring, inverting, and perverting effect, speech seems in its turn the speculum of writing, which "manages to usurp the main role." Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representor. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin.
>
> (*Grammatology* 36)

While wishing to assert the priority of Hebrew art over its classical representation, Blake simultaneously collapses this hierarchy through his aesthetic theory. Hence the terms in which he defines his aesthetic program also contain the potential threat of their own undoing. This threat to the pre-eminence of his visionary source is something which Blake seeks to defend against by defending the integrity of his hard, bounding outline. In its incarnation as a guarantee of visionary purity the outline, as it inscribes a masculine Human Form Divine, is also invested with the significance which Blake attaches to Hebrew art. Yet by maintaining this line of, technically, classical purity, Blake not only erects a phonocentric hierarchy but also introduces the possibility of usurpation which classicism represents as a specular shadow of its Hebrew source. In other words, the line as *pharmakos* or remedy is simultaneously a source of infection, as Blake reinscribes what he seeks to marginalize in the very movement he makes to defend against it.

In the section which follows, more time will be spent elaborating the concepts of the *pharmakos* and the abject as well as their structural similarities. This will further prepare the ground for an investigation of how Blake's aesthetic theory exemplifies the conflictual dynamic of abjection. It is important, however, to distinguish this *conflict* from a *contradiction* which appears in Blake's work. While abjection articulates a *conflict* between hierarchy and its dissolution, Blake produces a *contradiction* at places in his corpus when he seeks to subvert one kind of hierarchy by replacing it with another. In the former case of abjection, there are genuine opportunities for the subversion of a phallocentric, symbolic order. The latter case, though, sees Blake displace one kind of symbolic administration with another hierarchical arrangement which is ostensibly a form of liberation but, upon closer examination, becomes a reinscription of the displaced tyranny. Perhaps the best example of this kind of *contradiction* in Blake's work can be found in the character of Oothoon from *Visions Of The Daughters Of Albion*. Other critics have also foregrounded Oothoon's *contradictions* and called attention to her complicity with the Urizenic order she condemns.[5] The present study analyzes how she simultaneously protests her subjugation to a symbolic system of exchange while also acting as one of its architects. Rather than undermine patriarchal tyranny, Oothoon's 'rebellion' merely serves to reinforce it. Furthermore, the explanation for this *contradiction* can be found in Blake's philosophical subtext to the poem, advocating a liberation of the imagination through the creation of a male dominated hierarchy. In a word, he simply replaces one form of phallocentrism with another. As far as Blake's aesthetic theory is concerned, this *contradiction* also surfaces in his attitudes towards Rubens' artistic mode of production and style. For Blake, Rubens is a propagandist for monarchist tyranny who also exploits the creative labour power of the journeymen artists in his employ. Moreover, the painterly style employed by Rubens is a formal

analogue of these other patriarchal practices. Even though Blake develops a countervailing mode of production and style, intended as potentially liberating gestures, his stylistic use of clean delineation once again presupposes a patriarchal dominant discourse organized by his male conception of the Human Form Divine. Yet in spite of these contradictions and lapses, there is a *conflictual* process at work in Blake's text which actualizes the threatened deconstruction already contained within his sculptural aesthetics as a latent possibility. The *pharmakos*/abject surfaces in Blake's work as a subversive dynamic rescuing him from the Spectre of his own totalitarian and Urizenic alter (super) ego.

The *pharmakos*/abject and Blake's aesthetics

At the very beginning of what Derrida labels the Western metaphysical tradition Plato already sees the danger of subversion when he prescribes a cure for it in a work dedicated to the maintenance of a just social order. Derrida reminds us that in book X of the *Republic,* Plato bans poetry from the city because tragic poets "when they practice imitation, corrupt the minds of the listeners" (*Dissemination* 137). Although the poetry Plato has in mind is oral poetry or speech, it is at two removes from the truth and, as a copy of a copy, is homologous with writing as the sign of a sign. As the creator of mere appearances and phantasms, the poet, like the magician and the sorcerer, is an undesirable source of contamination and must be violently purged and exorcized from the city: "expelled or cut-off from the social arena" (*Dissemination* 97). In the following quotation, it should be remembered that Derrida refers to writing as painting and mimēsis in the common and literal sense, and not in the metaphorical manner in which mimēsis is analogous with speech:

> Plato is bent on presenting writing as an occult, and therefore suspect, power. Just like painting, to which he will later compare it, and like

> optical illusions and the techniques of *mimēsis* in general. His mistrust of the mantic and magic, of sorcerers and casters of spells, is well attested. In the *Laws*, in particular, he reserves them terrible punishments . . . he recommends that they be excluded--expelled or cut off--from the social arena.
>
> (*Dissemination* 97)

By suggesting that poets be exiled, Plato proposes that they be scapegoated to protect the borders and limits of the city-state and thus maintain the purity of the inside against possible contamination by the evil without. Known as the *pharmakos* in Greek, the scapegoat became identified with the presence of an invading evil which could only be purged from the body and city through a ritualistic form of violence. As Derrida writes:

> The city's body *proper* thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the security of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representative of an external threat or aggression. That representative represents the otherness of the evil that comes to affect or infect the inside by unpredictably breaking into it.
>
> (*Dissemination* 133)

By connecting the marginalization of writing with the ceremony of the *pharmakos*, Derrida draws attention to the violence inherent in the hierarchical dispositions of the metaphysical tradition. The privileged terms of its binary oppositions constitute a discursive *body* whose purity must be rigorously defended against the possibility of contamination. Writing, and all of its correlate metaphors, are death, corruption, and infection with respect to the health of the signified. Moreover, violence is not only a characteristic of a conceptual order but is also crucial to the survival of the social order which logocentrism reflects and

supports. To scapegoat writing is to scapegoat other marginalized social entities in the form of racism, homophobia and class oppression. In other words, the binary opposition between speech and writing serves as a structural blueprint for a system of metaphors that not only organizes ideological discursive formations into hierarchies but also organizes institutional discourse into real social relations of power and powerlessness. Similarly, the hierarchical distribution of logocentric binaries is not gender neutral. Catherine Clément describes two other pharmaceutical ceremonies in which the scapegoats are women. The sorceress, on the one hand, represents those natural disturbances of a culture defined by Christian creationism and its interpretations of Greek conceptuality. The hysteric, on the other hand, displays a bisexuality which challenges gender decidability and the economic system of exchanges based upon it. In both cases, women represent the danger of contaminating flows such as menstruation whose uninhibited circulation threatens to destabilize the hierarchies of a phallocentric order. Hence this order has devised spectacles in which male inquisitors and doctors bind, restrict and torture these women in order to release their demons or abreact their symptoms. Other related pharmaceutical ceremonies which share in the gender politics of the *pharmakos* also have to do with rituals of defilement which either forcefully exclude the maternal abject or seek to transform, cleanse and decontaminate her. It is on this level that Derrida's *pharmakos* and Kristeva's *abject* can be conceptually linked as part of the same process, manifesting itself in various metaphorical guises whether they be linguistic, political, religious or psychoanalytic. In these areas, the emphasis which logocentrism places on mastery, hierarchy, marginalization and purification makes it a useful ideological ally of any kind of totalitarianism, and in the present case, a reflection of the psychic totalitarianism which seeks to marginalize the maternal abject.

Blake participates in this mainstream phallocentric tradition in ways which overlap with the effects of the symbolic as a dominant discourse. As mentioned, the binaries articulated by his aesthetic theory are maintained and protected by his notion of a firm and unbroken bounding outline. This outline is like the boundary line between inside and outside which the ceremony of the *pharmakos* ceaselessly traces and retraces. In his case, what gets scapegoated are those binary elements associated with broken lines, broken forms, oil painting and Venetian or Flemish art. The political aspect of this collective *pharmakos*, and its correlation with the *abject*, can be made explicit by foregrounding the way in which Blake's outline tends to valorize and protect a *male*, Human Form Divine. The outline, in its capacity to clearly delineate form in keeping with certain sets of binary oppositions, is most often associated in Blake's iconography with the male body. Even though Blake does not specifically call attention to this aspect of his art, the work of Mellor, surveyed in the previous chapter, shows how indebted he is to Michelangelo's celebration of masculine form. Moreover, there are instances in which even the visual depiction of the female figure is absorbed into a masculine anatomy. Examples of this have already been cited in chapter one with the discussion of plates 28 and 99 from *Jerusalem* as well as the sexual ambiguity of Blake's visual representation of Christ. Further evidence can be found in the frontispiece to *America* (Fig. 6) depicting the enchained and winged Orc squatting in the breach of a city wall while a woman somberly stares into the distance with her arms folded about her children. Given that her muscular torso and left arm are anatomically masculine, the figure provides us with another example of the female's absorption. This tendency in Blake's visual art can be defined as an integral part of his phallocentrism. In this sense, the binaries which characterize his aesthetic theory are organized along sexual lines. Moreover, this masculinization of the clean and proper body overlaps, in certain important

Figure No. 6. The frontispiece to *America: a Prophecy.* Taken from *William Blake Masterpieces: 1990*, Petaluma: Pomegranate, 1990.

respects, with what Kristeva identifies as the thetic phase of psychosexual development and especially the consolidation of the child's unified image. Hence Blake's masculinization of the delineated human form can be read as a visual metaphor of the symbolic order's logocentric hegemony, in which the preoedipal, maternal function is marginalized or abjected by the coming to power of the Name-of-the-Father. With respect to this male body, the female constitutes a garment or veil to be cast off or absorbed in the apocalypse.

Although the binaries of Blake's aesthetic theory are not coded with clear gender markings, they can thus be seen as complicit with a misogynyst trend in his work. The marginalization of certain aesthetic categories is homologous with the exile of Blake's female metaphors to the pastoral fields of Beulah, or their absorption into male counterparts in Eden. Moreover, these aspects of Blake's theorizing and mythmaking conform to the dichotomous pattern of Occidental thought that Jardine sees as manifested in "the classically heterosexual couples of Western philosophy" (72). His scapegoating of figural indeterminacy, oil paint and painterly artistic traditions is thus symptomatically related to a scapegoating of the female, as it occurs in the rest of his work and in the larger metaphysical tradition which underwrites it. Also, his valorization of the masculine Human Form Divine is performed at the expense of these categories, homologous with the status of the maternal when abjected by the thetic.

Blake's aesthetic scapegoats, when coded as female and maternal, constitute an appropriate site for the intersection of both *pharmakos* and abject. They also provide us with a point of departure for considering another characteristic of both the *pharmakos* and abject at work in Blake's text: conflict. The previous section discussed abjection as a *conflicted* female configuration. In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva discusses this *conflict* as the rejection of the mother *under pressure of* the castration complex simultaneously with a desire to incorporate her. In her earlier

essay on Bellini, Kristeva's analysis is somewhat different. The *conflict* is instead one between rejecting the phallic mother *as an agent of* the castration complex, while seeking to embrace her in her capacity to facilitate the autoerotic fragmentation of the body. The *pharmakos*, on the other hand, is *conflicted* by being simultaneously defined as remedy and poison. I shall argue, in the course of this chapter, that these three types of *conflict* all come together in Blake's aesthetic theory. Specifically, the undecidability introduced by the *pharmakos* can be discovered in Blake's text as a *conflict* between the strenuous marginalization of the abject coupled with a tendency to be possessed by it as excremental infection.

Finally Blake is beset by *contradictory* attitudes towards the symbolic which the above *conflicts* collectively rectify. Although the symbolic is a term invented by Lacan, and politicized by Kristeva, there are points of comparison between it and what Blake identifies through the character, Urizen. In short, what Lacan, Kristeva and other theorists such as Irigaray identify as the symbolic, is configured within the context of Blake's system as an empiricist and rationalist epistemology represented by this personification. In spite of Blake's lifelong opposition to Urizen, his own hierarchical solution to Urizenic tyranny ends up reinforcing it in perverse, *contradictory* ways. Hence Oothoon's liberating gestures are simultaneously coopted by her own lapse into Urizenic patterns of oppression. The *conflictual*, by contrast, has more to do with the undecidability introduced by the satiric verse addressed to "Mother outline" who functions as a subversive incarnation of the phallic mother. It is my intent to show how the first *contradictory* dynamic, in which tyranny is inescapably reinscribed, is inadvertently offset in Blake by the second *conflictual* dynamic, as a release from it.

Conflict vs. Contradiction

As discussed earlier, the symbolic order constitutes the twin structures of linguistic and social organization erected through the onset of the castration complex. Linguistically, the prohibition of incest separates mother and child as a precondition for the syntactical differentiation between subject and object. As part of such paternal interdiction, the symbol intervenes and mediates between ourselves and what once was the immediacy of our relatedness to our maternal milieu. Socially, the Name-of-the-Father defines our place within the familial structure by declaring the noncoincidence of alliance and kinship relations. In both cases we are individualized, as either a linguistic and grammatical subject or a specific gender identity. Kristeva improvises upon Lacan by foregrounding the way in which the sexual repression of incestuous drives energizes the repressive institutions of family and State. Specifically, the individuation of the speaking subject within the symbolic supports the capitalist ideology of bourgeois individualism, and its related system of economic exploitation.

Parallel to this critique of the symbolic is Irigaray's observation that it organizes a patriarchal society through the commodification of women as value exchanged between men. The prohibition of incest not only interdicts sexual relations with the mother. It also establishes and opens up more appropriate possibilities through which the forbidden and sacrificed relationship with the mother can be partially recuperated. This occurs when the male subject learns to identify with the father, and accept his place in a normative cultural network through which maternal substitutes can be obtained. Moreover, the procuring of such a substitute is the fundamental exchange upon which other cultural transactions are modeled as a transfer of wealth between men. As Irigaray writes:

> The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women . . . The passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, into order as such, is assured by the fact that men, or groups of men, circulate women among themselves, according to a rule known as the incest taboo . . . It assures the foundation of the economic, social, and cultural order that has been ours for centuries.
>
> ("Women" 170)

It is here that we find Blake's most explicit intersection with what these various theorists call the symbolic. In *Visions Of The Daughters Of Albion* the Urizenic tyranny of this order is condemned by Oothoon, who articulates her rage as an item of exchange caught between Bromion and Theotormon. On the one hand she is "Stampt with [Bromion's] signet [as] are the swarthy children of the sun" and has become a commodity as both "harlot" and sexual slave (1:21-23). Impregnated by Bromion, there is even the suggestion that Oothoon's value will increase as the producer of a child "put forth in nine moons time" (2:2). This foregrounds what Irigaray would call Oothoon's "reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force)" ("Women" 173). On the other hand, Theotormon is governed by the same economic system equating Oothoon's value with her integrity as a virgin. Having broken her hymen, Bromion possesses Oothoon and can market her at the going rate. Yet there is a sense in which she should have lawfully belonged to Theotormon, as his wife, and if anyone should have taken her virginity, it should have been him. Hence he jealously regards Bromion and Oothoon as an "adulterate pair" (2:4). Oothoon is trapped in an order judging her exclusively as a physical commodity. To Bromion her rape and impregnation have increased her market value; to Theotormon she is just damaged goods.

Oothoon's critique is delivered as a blanket condemnation of the entire symbolic order and the system of sexual exchange upon which it is based. In her own words, this system is inundated by "cold floods of abstraction" (5:19). For Bromion, it is "one law for both the lion and the ox" (4:22). Finally, for Theotormon, it is the "substance" which underlies all thought (3:23). What each of these characters identifies, in his or her own words, is a tendency to reduce the vital multiplicity of life, and its differing perspectives, to one uniform empirical principle. The characteristic feature of such systematization is the reduction of one's "infinite brain into a narrow circle" by enclosing it within the five senses (2:32). Once identity and purity become a function merely of the corporeal body, then a price can be put on a woman's virginity. The consequences of such a move are the enslavement of women as sexual commodities through the creation of loveless marriages; the prevalence of coy, manipulative women who use virginity as their only recourse to power; and sexual frustration along with its offshoot, prostitution. Aside from the creation of dysfunctional relations based on this definition of virginal purity, one also discovers a host of other social ills motivated in some way by the principle of enslavement. These include Bromion as archetypal slave monger and landlord subjugating both the "American plains . . . [and] . . . swarthy children of the sun" (1:20-21). Yet when Oothoon decries this oppressive system in her address to Urizen, she not only names its deistical progenitor, but also cites the oppressive behaviour of men formed to his image. She condemns usury and the poverty it creates, urban exploitation of the rural poor and the existence of parasitical classes feeding off of agricultural labour, in a series of rhetorical and ironic questions:

Does he who condemns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence
From usury: feel the same passion or are they moved alike?
How can the giver of gifts experience the delights of the merchant?
How the industrious citizen the pains of the husbandman.
How different far the fat fed hireling with hollow drum;
Who buys whole corn fields into wastes, and sings upon the heath:
How different their eye and ear! how different the world to them!
With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
What are his nets & gins & traps. & how does he surround him
With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude,
To build him castles and high spires where kings and priests may dwell.

(5:10-20)

Oothoon introduces these questions in the context of her belief in differing perspectives, or as she would say, "different joys/ Holy, eternal, infinite!" (5:4-5). Although the first question does not appear to frame any difference, implying instead a condemnation of both poverty and usury, the others reach a rhetorical crescendo in which class difference, and the exploitation of one class by another, become glaringly apparent. Wishing to affirm the principle of difference, Oothoon demonstrates how the hegemony of a particular empiricist perspective paradoxically produces its own difference between exploiter and exploited. Ultimately, it is the empiricism of the five senses which turns a curtain of flesh into the chain of Oothoon's sexual slavery, while transforming others into economic wage slaves. By being turned into a commodity, Oothoon embodies the character of a social, cultural and economic order, defined by Lacan, Kristeva and Irigaray as the symbolic. In short, her commodification is the precondition for the commodification and exploitation of others.

For Blake the reductive, empirical homogeneity of Bromion's "one law" is directly related to Locke's empiricism and Newtonian physics: eighteenth-century developments in philosophy and science which support the notion that the world's multiplicity is governed by a fixed, finite set of laws derived through a process of abstraction from the evidence of nature. Ultimately this empiro-scientific *Weltanschauung* breeds submission to tyranny since it encourages passivity, both with respect to the activity of sensations upon the mind and subservience to the Newtonian narrative of physics. In this last instance, Newton systematizes the universe into a "single unified field" of regulated and predictable movements governed unalterably by a remote and inaccessible body of law (Ault 3). Such a realm of abstraction also encourages belief in a mysterious deity who creates this universe as a mill, factory or clockwork, only to abandon it to its own fixed and interminable perpetual motion. The next step in this proto-fascist, ideological development is for Deism to solidify kingly power by providing it with the necessary underpinnings of submission and unquestioning obedience. In Marxist terms, the State's ability to guarantee the interests of a particular class is now supported by the widespread belief that this class's ownership of the relations and means of production is as reified and immutable as natural law. One now accepts the rule of Kings as easily as one accepts the law of gravity since both are remote, mysterious, inaccessible and cannot be altered through human activity.

Although Urizen is most often identified as Blake's metaphor of a phallocentric political tyranny, it should also be noted that this personification of empiricism, rational abstraction and bondage does not work alone, but is often assisted by other female configurations. When considered as a conceptual aggregate, including the likes of Vala, Enitharmon, Rahab and Tirzah, this collective female metaphor is identified as the Female Will and represents the alienation of nature from the human imagination. Taken together, the alliance

between Urizen and the Female Will articulates the conceptual interdependence between the circumscribing power of rational abstraction and the philosophical presupposition of an independent, empirical substance beyond the senses. Another connection made by Blake relates the concept of an independent object-world, imagined as woman, to the worship of a female principle. This leads to the cult of the Madonna and the elevation of virginity as further conceptual elaborations of the ideological nexus between empiricism and rational abstraction. Hence Blake identifies sexual repression as part of a repressive system curtailing the activity of the imagination, which would otherwise manifest itself as sexual exuberance, political activism and artistic creativity. In *Visions*, Blake presupposes this entire conceptual network and focuses upon the sexual repression of commodified women as its ideological linchpin.

Critics have often assumed that Oothoon speaks for Blake when she howls against the sexual, social, cultural and economic restraint of the Urizenic tyranny her sublime lamentation names. Her explosive condemnation of this system can be read as Blake's critique of what contemporary critical theory refers to as the symbolic order. Moreover, this attack upon the symbolic penetrates into other aspects of Blake's thinking, including his theorizing on issues pertaining to aesthetics. Northrop Frye, in his article on "Poetry and Design in William Blake" is one of the first critics to discuss Blake's aesthetic practice in the context of a revolutionary rejection of forms of exploitation interpreted here as the symbolic order. Specifically, Frye argues that Blake struggled throughout his artistic life to gain complete control over "his own means of production." If this could be accomplished "it would make him independent of publishers as well as of patrons, so that he could achieve personal independence as both poet and painter in a single blow" (149). Implicit within Frye's comments is the belief that Blake anticipates Marx, as well as William Morris, in seeing "revolutionary action" as the creation

of a "free and equal working society" in which "real work and creative activity [are] the same thing." Hence "the essential revolutionary act [is] . . . the revolt of the creative artist who is also a manufacturer, in the original sense of one who works with his hands." In order to achieve his goal of worker emancipation from wage slavery, Blake sought a "revolutionary break with both patronage and commercial exploitation" made possible by the creation of a "revolutionary new method of production" (148). Throughout his artistic career, Blake experimented with three of these: engraving, large-scale reproduction of prints by means of a millboard and a revival of fresco painting. Although none of these proved as efficient and successful as Blake had hoped, they nevertheless remained attempts at the creation of "a new instrument of production that would initiate a social revolution" (149).

While Frye alludes to the system of patronage and commercial exploitation from which Blake sought to free himself, Edward J. Rose focuses more upon the way Blake singles these out for censure and attack. In his article on Blake's hostility towards Reubens, Rose articulates the political subtext underlying the marginalization of broken delineation, oil painting and painterly artistic traditions. In Blake's aesthetic theory, Rubens becomes a kind of catchword or exemplar for these rejected practices and traditions. Moreover, both his politics and aesthetic principles place Rubens on the side of empire and, by implication, also condemn all categories and traditions related to him for the same political reasons. Rose observes "that Blake was convinced Rubens was a conscious manipulator, who with cold calculation chose the career of a painter to better his place in the world." To this end Rubens became a "professional sycophant . . . offering himself on the altar of Empire . . . [as] a deceiver and pretender who sought patronage and satisfied patrons with excessive flattery" (313). As an example of Rubens' servility, Rose cites his cycle of twenty-two huge canvases celebrating the life of

Marie de Medici who was the wife of Henry IV of France and regent on behalf of Louis XIII, his son. Not only does Rubens support empire in such an ostensible manner, but his prolific output of 3000 paintings in less than forty years, is explained by his use of journeymen wage labourers. Not only is Rubens "a chosen emissary of Empire" and "court painter" but he also uses a factory approach to artistic production which is the "equivalent to the industrial slavery of eighteenth-century England" (315-16). While satisfying the demands of moneyed and political interests, Rubens imitates his patrons by exploiting the labour power of wage-slavery. Related to Rubens' complicity with industrial slavery is his aesthetics of broken lines, broken colours and broken masses through which any canvas produced by him becomes generalized and indiscriminate. This aspect of Rubens' method aligns him with those aesthetic categories marginalized by Blake's phonocentric theory. Moreover, this tendency towards generalization is an artistic reproduction of the rational abstractions and generalized laws so crucial to the tyranny Blake rejects: "Rubens is the Locke of painting--a Urizen of the arts. He is an aesthetic version of Newton because his coloring is a generalizing power" (Rose 328). Hence Rubens becomes an agent and representative of the symbolic's tyranny in three interconnected ways: by celebrating the divine status of royalty on his canvases, by exploiting wage labour, and by creating artistic parodies of rational abstractions. For the purposes of our present discussion, it is thus most important to focus on Rose's comparison of Blake's opposition to tyranny with his opposition to certain aesthetic practices and traditions:

> The analogy by which Blake assumed the case of the Roman and Florentine schools against the Flemish and Venetian is parallel to his identification with the prophet's opposition to the priest or the rebel's opposition to the tyrant. The art of which Rubens was the prime symbol is dictatorial

> because it 'hinders all power of individual thought' and is as socially and politically suspect as it is aesthetically suspect.
>
> (330)

What Frye and Rose identify in Blake is the way in which his aesthetic practice and theory become extensions of his systematic rejection of Urizenic tendencies. Yet what they do not include in their observations is his reenactment of tyranny, in a new guise, through his rejection of it. Blake substitutes new paternalistic hierarchies for old ones when he opposes his own linear mode of production to that of Rubens. By remaining blind to this *contradiction* in Blake they also miss the operation of other more subversive *conflictual* dynamics. Even though Rubens' painterly style is aligned by Rose with rationalist Urizenic abstractions, there is another reading, made available by Kristeva's theory, which suggests that Rubens is *conflicted* between his own repressive relations of production and a more subversive painterly and abject mode of production. Likewise, Rose is also blind to Blake's own aesthetic *conflict* as a painterly subversion of a hierarchical linear style which Rose can only see as an opposition to tyranny. Even though Frye and Rose implictly give Blake credit for consistency in both his poetry and aesthetics on the issue of this opposition, Blake is more complicated and *contradictory* than this. While I have already given an indication of how this *contradiction* might apply to Blake's sculptural aesthetics as a hierarchical and marginalizing phonocentrism, we shall shortly see how it also works itself out in *Visions* as well.

As mentioned, it would appear that Blake is quite consistent when directing his attack against the symbolic order. In both his poetry and art, Blake agitates against this tyranny which, in *Visions*, rests upon the exchange of women and, implicitly, upon the incest taboo presupposed by it. Yet Blake promotes the symbolic order while simultaneously seeking to combat it, and is caught up in the

very tyranny he seeks to marginalize. Even in his most liberating gestures, Blake remains complicit with patterns of oppression.

We see this in *Visions* where Oothoon's protest against female commodification is undermined by her offer to use "silken nets and traps of adamant" to catch "girls of mild *silver*, or of furious *gold*" for Theotormon's pleasure (7:23-24; emphasis added). Ostensibly, Oothoon wishes to free herself and Theotormon, as well as an entire culture, from the cult of virginity and its capacity to enslave. To this end she rejects the Lockean epistemology which reduces all knowledge, including knowledge of one's purity, to the hegemony of empirical facts. Hence she proclaims the purity of her imagination, as something which is free from the determinations of the corporeal body. In spite of being raped by Bromion, Oothoon is still a

> . . . . . virgin fill'd with virgin fancies
> Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears
> If in the morning sun I find it: there my eyes are fix'd
> In happy copulation. . . .
>
> (6:21-7:1)

In other words, Oothoon's ability to see imaginatively, *through* the eye, is not circumscribed by an epistemology demanding that she see *with* it. Oothoon proclaims her own active, intellectual engagement with the world in metaphorical terms as a "happy copulation." It is a way of seeing which is open to a multiplicity of particulars and the way in which each one of these can be used as a window of opportunity onto eternity. The corporeal world of decay and transience can thus be transformed into one redolent with inspired vision. Oothoon (and Blake), moreover, extend this metaphorical notion of "happy copulation" to include a free and open sexuality. An energetic and active engagement with the world, leading to a perceptual transformation of it, also entails "an improvement

of sensual enjoyment" (*MHH* 14). Heightened perception, as a metaphorical sexual embrace, utilizes the same energy found in free and unrestrained sex. Hence Oothoon's cry of intellectual battle: "Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind!" (7:16). Oothoon's revolutionary program of free love thus functions as *the* central weapon in a struggle against the Lockean and Newtonian constraints placed upon vision. Yet, in the end, she becomes a procuress for Theotormon, using the ideology of free love to provide him with a harem of women, figured forth as sexual commodities insofar as they become pure exchange value or the precious metals of silver and gold. In seeking to subvert the effects of the symbolic, Blake reinscribes it by having Oothoon practise the very exchange which subjugates her. Blake, moreover, repeats this contradiction in his aesthetic theory by employing a phallocentric conceptual system against an artistic practice which also doubles as a representative of certain symbolic symptoms. In short, he reintroduces male dominated hierarchies in his attempt to actively erase the symbolic as one of these.

Yet what I hope to demonstrate below is that there is a female activity at work in Blake's text which subverts this contradictory reinscription of the symbolic. In other words, Mother outline, as a version of the phallic mother, becomes the site of a conflict in Blake between her capacity as symbolic agent, on the one hand, and representative of anal sadistic rhythms which exert an attractive force on him. As either a Fury or Siren, Mother outline threatens dismemberment to those who might stray into excrementitious aesthetic practices and thus acts as a symbolic deterrent to the possibility of incestuous transgressions. In this case the excremental nature of Venetian and Flemish art doubles as the maternal abject against which one must maintain hard and fast limits. Consequently Mother outline's dual-persona behaves like the phallic mother threatening the child phobic with dismemberment for incestuous wishes.

However, the ironies surrounding Mother outline reveal that Blake also behaves much like the phobic child who is simultaneously repulsed by the abject *and* drawn towards it.

While Kristeva's concept of abjection seems most appropriate as a theoretical tool in the context of Blake's aesthetics, one must also learn how to shift back-and-forth between it and some of her other conceptions of conflict in order to properly appreciate the psychoanalytic dynamics of his text. In the last chapter we discussed Kristeva's examination of three conflictual processes: the semiotic, the signifying process and abjection. The semiotic is a term used by Kristeva to describe the conflict between anal-sadistic drives and their regulation. Both the mobilization of these drives and their punctuation by stasis are initiated through interaction with the mother who serves as incestuous catalyst and symbolic mediator. The signifying process is a conflict produced through the eruption of semiotic rhythms (the alternation of drive and stasis) into symbolic structures which have already been firmly posited by the thetic phase. This eruption takes place through the process of rejection in which anal sadism is quieted through the creation of an object-world and language. Initially the rejection of feces is pleasurable to the child yet it is also threatening since the child interprets this expulsion as an attack upon its own body. However once the child individuates itself during the thetic phase, a clear distinction is made between the body and what it eliminates. The child no longer feels threatened and uses feces as the basis upon which to develop its conception of a world for which language can act as a substitute. This process of differentiation between the child's body and rejected feces is duplicated by the child's rejection of the mother's breast. The thetic individuation of the child encourages the rejection of both objects and the incestuous pleasure associated with anal/oral sadism. Yet the force of anal-sadistic drives gets passed along to the mouth which is less capable of restraining

explosions of pleasure than the anal sphincter. Consequently this incestuous *jouissance* finds a release through language which is also one of the central structures of a symbolic order dedicated to its repression. Finally the abject surfaces in the context of a phobic child's fear of being consumed by the phallic mother while simultaneously consuming her in the form of language. While acting as both an agent of the symbolic and source of incestuous pleasure, the mother comes to be represented as excrement or a variety of filthy substitutes which are simultaneously rejected and desired.

In all of the above cases we are dealing with conflicts surrounding anality which are interconstitutional with conflicted attitudes towards the mother. Anal sadistic *jouissance* is always at odds with some feature of the symbolic/thetic order while the mother is either incestuously connected with this pleasure or symbolically implicated in its repression. Yet such significant correlations should not lead us to a premature identification of these conflictual dynamics with each other. While being structurally similar, the semiotic, the signifying process and abjection can all be differentiated if one compares their respective positions on the chronological axis of psychosexual development. The semiotic is essentially a prethetic formation, occurring in what orthodox psychoanalysis knows as the *pre*oedipal phase of development. It *predates* the onset of the castration complex and thetic-phase individuation. The signifying process on the other hand, requires a secure thetic foundation for the subject position and thus can only be said to function in a *post*oedipal context *after* the onset of the castration complex. Meanwhile abjection is essentially a phenomenon occurring during the transition from the preoedipal to the postoedipal. In the case of the child phobic this development has been arrested for one reason or another. Neither does the child occupy a well formed subject position nor does s/he relate to substitute objects for the mother. It is only by passing through abjection that the child clearly

delineates its own boundaries and thereby creates the possibility for greater clarity with respect to his or her object choices. A student of Kristeva is thus left in the difficult position of having to negotiate the tensions in her work calling for an identification of these conflictual processes while also recognizing their distinctness.

Because of these complex pressures and counterpressures, it is sometimes extraordinarily difficult for the literary critic to know when to use one of Kristeva's concepts in analyzing a work since the application of any one of them automatically resonates with influences from the other two. For example, the current context of discussion concerning Blake's aesthetic theory requires that abjection take the lead in an analysis of his work using Kristevan concepts. That much is clear given Blake's use of scatological metaphors, his violent expulsion of excrementitious artistic practices, and his defense of a delineated human form through such rejections. Yet there are other factors inherent in both Blake's text and Kristeva's theory which pull our analysis more in the direction of the signifying process. In the discussion which follows, certain aspects of Kristeva's argument in *Revolution* will be highlighted because of the comparisons that can be made between the signifying process and Derridean notions of undecidability. In some cases these comparisons are explictly made by Kristeva while in others they are implicit. Moreover, the link between abjection and the *pharmakos* also suggests a conflation between the former term and the signifying process mediated by the fact that Derrida also uses the *pharmakos* as a designation of undecidability. Finally the undecidability discovered in Blake's aesthetic theory also provides further grounds for an identification of abjection with the signifying process. Thus the combination of the possibilities in Blake's aesthetic theory and Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory creates a unique situation in which the concepts

of abjection and the signifying process will both be used in contexts where they sometimes appear together and other times appear separately.

The task of analysis will be less complicated when we come to *The Four Zoas*. Because of my treatment of *The Four Zoas* as in some ways a chronological narrative of psychic development it will be easier to keep my use of Kristevan concepts clear and distinct. Hence the conflicts in Night I will be discussed in terms of the semiotic while those appearing after the development of the symbolic in Nights II, IV and V will be read as examples of the signifying process. This is especially true of Vala's Garden Scene of Night IX. Unlike Blake's aesthetic theory, *The Four Zoas* does not ask us to take advantage of the affinities between Kristeva's theoretical concepts and their ability to slide into each other while remaining distinct.

Blake's Logocentric Line

Before turning to the conflictual dynamics of Blake's aesthetic theory and practice, it should be mentioned that his valorization of a firm, unbroken bounding outline was never unequivocally sustained throughout his artistic career. What I maintain, though, is that Blake's concerns about the use of a linear style were ultimately resolved so that he could affirm outline as evidence of vision and imagination. Anne Mellor has already given a detailed account of this process in her book, *Blake's Human Form Divine*. By briefly rehearsing her argument, one discovers that Blake finally settles upon the affirmation of delineation as it appears in his "Descriptive Catalogue." Moreover, Mellor's articulation of Blake's resolution presupposes the logocentric binaries of inside and outside. Hence this survey of Blake's artistic development will serve as a general introduction to my more specific handling of his aesthetics.

Anne Mellor's book describes how the Romantic classicism of Blake's time strongly influenced him through his friendship with Fuseli and the latter's familiarity with the aesthetic theories of Winckelmann. She argues that Blake's early career as poet and painter is beset by the contradiction between energy and reason, open and closed form. During this period, Blake's notion of the sublime is defined as an ever expansive energy "directed toward the possession of greater sexual, political or intellectual freedom" (45). This emphasis on energy leads Blake, in Mellor's estimation, to the creation of more open and fluid forms such as the atectonic designs for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Yet in opposition to energy, there is a circumscribing power or contrary which Blake calls reason. Thus, in the *Marriage*, energy and reason are seen as interdependent. On the one hand reason, as the outward bound or circumference of energy, is an attribute or expression of it, serving as means to an end. In this sense, Mellor uses the "Nurses Song" from *Innocence* as an example insofar as the reasoned argument of the children makes it possible for them to remain outdoors and engage in energetic play. On the other hand, energy requires the opposition and resistance of reason in order to realize its own power by going beyond rational limits.

Although this dialectic ultimately serves the ends of energy, as Blake's sublime force, there is a middle period, analyzed by Mellor, in which reason and the closed form gain the upper hand. Blake's artwork and visual style become more closed, tectonic and neoclassical, relying increasingly on "a rectilinear format and a stable horizontal-vertical axis" (63). Although still committed to the energy of the human body, Blake is compromised by a Romantic classicism whose "precision, linear rhythm, incisive contour, and grandeur" both glorify and entrap it (139). Moreover, this stylistic and iconographical contradiction is reinforced by Blake's pessimistic reevaluation of the French Revolution as another Orc cycle. Blake's growing scepticism concerning the viability of revolutionary energy shows

itself in his ambivalent portrayal of Orc, representing a more sober assessment of the paradoxical potentiality of energy to be both liberating and self-perverting.

Having reached this impasse during the period in which the Lambeth prophecies were written, Blake only begins to extricate himself from it while writing his epics. Beginning with *The Four Zoas* these constitute a Christianized revision of Blake's earlier work. Blake no longer sees man as polarized between energy and reason, but as the reconciliation of four capacities (Zoas) in which imagination replaces energy as the "primary power of salvation" while working through the powers of reason (205). Such reintegration brings about a transformation of the corporeal body into a spiritual body or Human Form Divine as "an expansive physical form that embodies and reveals man's [innate] holiness" (205). Mellor argues that Blake's introduction of the Zoas reinterprets the fall as a psychological rather than a physical event. Redemption, therefore, occurs within the human body which manifests or displays one's achievement of psychic integration. Moreover, the production of art as the creation of "ideal outlines" becomes the primary vehicle through which one realizes and brings about one's own redemption while providing others with "model[s] of integration and effective organization that [they] can follow" (208). Hence Blake returns to the artistic representation of the human form as a detailed and organized portrayal of its own redemptive possibilities. It becomes both the means to and the end of the redemptive process. As Mellor argues, Blake "rediscover[s] a poetic and an artistic image that acknowledge[s] the necessity of a bounding line and yet allow[s] man to be, at least potentially, infinite" by emulating the expansive divine body of Christ as Imagination (214). The human form divine now becomes what she calls a "total symbol" through which the artist demonstrates his own innate holiness and communicates this vision to others as a teaching instrument with the help of "precise distinctions" and an "unwavering outline" (214). What was once a

corporeal prison is changed through the transforming process of psychic reintegration into something which reveals divinity through the very bounding outline which once inhibited it.

Mellor's analysis assumes that Blake manages, by the end of his career, to reconcile the infinite expansiveness of imagination, formerly attributed to energy, with the organized particularity of delineated form. What is of interest to us is the way in which Blake articulates this reconciliation within a conceptual system valorizing the inside over the outside. What takes priority, for Blake, is the interior process of psychic reintegration and the innate condition of holiness it signifies. By comparison, the delineated human form behaves much like the phonocentric conception of speech in its ability to transparently display and exhibit such interior meaning. Hence the human form becomes an expressive sign or signifier of a divine signified. In spite of the fact that the human form is indissolubly wed to the imagination, as speech is wed to meaning, there still is a discernible hierarchy in their relationship. These logocentric dispositions will also become apparent in Blake's own theoretical pronouncements, with the addition of a further distinction between originality and imitation, homologous with the difference between speech and writing. What Mellor inadvertently describes as the logocentric pattern of Blake's general development can also be discovered in the particular details of his theory.

In his "Descriptive Catalogue" Blake includes a fairly long analysis of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* serving as a prospectus to his painting of Chaucer's pilgrims. Within this section is a paragraph in which Blake declares for his own style as against the unruly practices of his artistic enemies:

> The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak

> imagination, plagiarism, and bungling. Great inventors, in all ages, knew this: Protogenes and Apelles knew each other by this line. Rafael and Michael Angelo, and Albert Durer, are known by this and this alone. The want of this determinate and bounding form evidences the want of idea in the artist's mind, and the pretence of the plagiary in all its branches. How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements? What is it that builds a house and plants a garden, but the definite and determinate? What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions. Leave out this l[i]ne and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist. Talk no more then of Correggio, or Rembrandt, or any other of those plagiaries of Venice or Flanders. They were but the lame imitators of lines drawn by their predecessors, and their works prove themselves contemptible dis-arranged imitations and blundering misapplied copies.
>
> (E 550)

Along with the oppositions between firm and broken outline and different artistic traditions, Blake includes the binaries of strong and weak imagination, and the difference between original invention and the plagiarism of imitation. Implicit within these oppositions, and everthing else Blake says in this paragraph, is the distinction between a good and bad writing. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida draws our attention to this crucial opposition:

> There is therefore a good and a bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exterior of the body. A modification well within the Platonic diagram: writing of the soul and of the body, writing of the interior and of the exterior, writing of conscience and of the passions, as there is a voice of the soul and a voice of the body . . . One must constantly go back toward the "voice of nature," the "holy voice of nature," that merges with the divine inscription and prescription. . . .
>
> (17-18)

Good writing inscribes the interiority of the heart, soul and conscience and is practised by both man and God. It is a slight modification of the phonocentric model in which the transparency of speech expresses the interior script of meaning and allows it to show itself. Hence, in Blake's case, the "distinct, sharp and wirey . . . bounding line" becomes a kind of good writing indistinguishable from the interiority which it makes visible. This is how Protogenes and Apelles know each other, by virtue of expressing their souls through the agency of this line. Likewise, a firm bounding outline communicates the "idea in the artist's mind" while a broken line, as bad writing, does not.

The bounding line also determines what things essentially are as distinguished from what they are not and is drawn, in this case, by the "almighty." By having the almighty inscribe the contours of the world, in a creative and original act, Blake is employing the topos of the *liber naturae*, or the book of Nature, as God's writing. Elsewhere, in the "Annotations To Lavater," Blake informs us that "everything on earth is the word of God & in its essence *is* God" (E599). Derrida argues that the book of Nature is a metaphor for "the Platonic writing of truth in the soul" and that it "confirms the privilege of the logos" as speech in immediate proximity to meaning (*Grammatology* 13). Just as

meaning governs the proliferation of signs which stand in for it, the book, as a totality, presupposes a unifying presence. The book is thus comprehended by an external presence which envelops the totality of its signs, "preexists it, [and] supervises its inscriptions [while remaining] independent of it in its ideality" (*Grammatology* 18). As author of this book, Blake's almighty draws his line out upon the face of chaos, inscribes his word, and brings a world into existence populated by oaks, beech trees, horses, oxen, houses, gardens, honest men and knaves. Standing outside and above nature, he comprehends everything and sets the totality of his creation down within its proper limits. He supervises and masters his inscriptions as an independent ideality who nevertheless *reveals* himself through the transparency of his word or logos. Like Protogenes, Apelles, Raphael, Michelangelo and Dürer, God is an original inventor who uses a firm and bounding line to display his interiority so that we may know something about him.

On the other hand, Venetian and Flemish artists practise a bad writing which is "perverse and artful [and] exiled in the exterior of the body." In the passage from the "Descriptive Catalogue" already cited, Blake seeks to distinguish clearly between this bad form of art and its good counterpart within the context of a hierarchy in which the latter is in immediate and direct contact with a visionary signified while the former is not. It would appear, then, that Blake is dealing with two kinds of artist: those who use a linear style and those who imitate it. Yet in naming these two kinds of artist, Blake simultaneously seems to imply three kinds of art: delineated art, the imitation of this art and the latter's deterioration. The reason for this can perhaps be found in another distinction which Blake also implicitly makes between the fixed and eternal nature of good delineated art as opposed to the transitory nature of its imitative derivative. Moreover, the passage under discussion incorporates transitoriness by having Blake's characterization of bad art subtly *enact* the process of change and decay which defines it as a

derivative and external writing of the body. In short, Blake's distinction between delineated art and its derivative imitation assumes, as its metaphysical subtext, a host of logocentric binaries including the permanence of soul as opposed to the body's transitoriness. Hence the passage may foreground a binary distinction between artists yet the second, inferior one practises an art which begins in close proximity to its superior counterpart only to change and decay into a contaminated aspect of itself.

Protogenes, Apelles etc. are those who use a linear style to express the immediacy of their own visionary imagination. Correggio and Rembrandt, however, are "the lame imitators of lines drawn by their predecessors." In saying this, Blake seems to align them with classical artists who copied Hebrew sculpture. But rather than give these imitators credit for perceiving something of the divine, contained within the originals, he instead focuses on the crippled nature of such plagiarism. If imitation eventually leads to a direct perception of eternal archetypes, then an artist can gradually wean himself from it and use linear style, acquired through copying, to express his immediate relationship to these forms. The good artist learns to use a line whose sharp, wirey hardness and durability are characteristics of an authentic and transparent link with the ideality of vision. This line becomes a visual correlate of speech.

Unfortunately, Correggio and Rembrandt are unable to learn this lesson and consequently practise a degenerating form of delineation. Although these bad artists start out like good ones, there is something about their line which is "less keen and sharp." At this point they still practise delineation but it is apparently flawed and inauthentic since they are not in direct, transparent contact with visionary origins. It is almost as if this alienation from archetypes weakens their line, turning it into a blurred and porous parody of delineation proper. As we continue to read on in this passage, we discover that Blake changes his

characterization of the line drawn by these artists. Rather than behave as artists who imperfectly imitate linear art, Correggio and Rembrandt now exhibit a complete "want of this determinate and bounding form." Not only do they lack a hard and wirey line in terms of producing only a blurred and porous one, but they "Leave out this line" to such an extent that everything is reduced to "chaos."

Having started with a flawed line they end with its utter evaporation. Their works begin by exhibiting the worst characteristics of classicism, being nothing more than imitations drawn from forms more intimately connected to the imagination. Exiled to the exterior of the *body*, they are copies of copies or signs of other superior signs. These imitations are homologous with the common definition of writing as derivative and inferior when compared to speech. Like Plato's definition of art they are twice removed from the truth. Finally the 'corporeal' nature of this script subjects it to a process of decay in which it loses all semblance of delineation, becoming a "chaos" of "dis-arranged imitations and blundering misapplied copies." Once one fails to learn the proper lesson from imitation, and does not graduate to a direct perception of eternal archetypes, then one is on a slippery slope of decay, sliding from imitation of the line to its complete absence. Hence the confusing overlap, in the paragraph cited above, between imitation of the line and a painterly style which lacks it and reduces all to chaos. Bad or inferior imitation of the line produces a 'form' which is "less keen and sharp" and provides "evidence of weak imagination" in that the artist is alienated from his own potential divinity. In extreme cases of such self-alienation, imitation creates a painterly chaos of decayed, transitional matter which Blake also explicitly characterizes elsewhere as excrement.

Blake's efforts to clearly distinguish between the binaries articulating his aesthetic theory are moves choreographed by logocentrism. What is even more interesting is that his aesthetic observations also rehearse other moves made by

this tradition, to defend the pure interiority of speech from becoming contaminated by writing. From the very beginning of this tradition, writing is a danger and an evil which can befall speech from without. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato denounces writing as a kind of "housebreaker, threatening internal purity and security" (*Dissemination* 34). It is "an archetypal violence [and] eruption of the *outside* within the *inside*, breaking into the interiority of the soul" (*Grammatology* 34). Hence it sometimes becomes a question, not of protecting, but of restoring the internal system to its purity. Faced with the unpredictability of such intrusions, the *pharmakos* or scapegoat must be cast out as the crucial restorative device. In similar fashion, the corrupting influence of the incestuous maternal abject must also be neutralized, in rituals of defilement, if the clean and proper body is to remain intact.

Blake resorts to both these measures, simultaneously, when he identifies Venetian and Flemish art as excrement. In doing so, he combines the infectious and poisonous threat of the *pharmakos* with the anality of semiotic drive motility or rejection as something which is exclusively bad (i.e. abject). He becomes most explicit in the annotations to Reynolds in reference to the colouring of Rubens:

> ⟨To My Eye Rubens's Colouring is most Contemptible His Shadows are of a Filthy Brown somewhat of the Colour of Excrement these are filld with tints & messes of yellow & red His lights are all the Colours of the Rainbow laid on Indiscriminately & broken one into another. Altogether his Colouring is Contrary to The Colouring. of Real Art & Science⟩. . . .
>
> (E655)

Blake's distaste for Rubens is intended as a scatological insult to the imitative productions of the slobbering schools which Rubens represents. Although Rubens is not mentioned in the passage from the "Descriptive Catalogue" already quoted along with other "lame imitators" such as Rembrandt and Correggio, there are

other contexts in which he appears as one of their company. For example, elsewhere in the "Descriptive Catalogue" Blake warns us that "Till we get rid of Titian, and Correggio, Rubens and Rembrandt, We shall never equal Rafael and Albert Durer, Michael Angelo, and Julio Romano" (E530). When lumped together as a kind of Venetian and Flemish artistic mafia, these artists are most often condemned by Blake for their practice of "broken lines, broken masses, and broken colours" (E538). Even though Blake condemns Rubens and his associates for their indiscriminate use of colour to disrupt the lineaments of a clear, unbroken outline, the presupposition at work is that they are still imitators of the worst kind. Were it not for their practice of bad imitation they would not collectively exhibit similar problems with delineation and colour. Although Rubens, Rembrandt, Correggio and Titian are sometimes used by Blake as examples of specific, individual artistic failings they are so often referred to as a group in his condemnations, that one gets the sense of a general complicity in which they all share each other's faults. Hence we can assume that Rubens is a "lame imitator" like his other colleagues from the slobbering school, Rembrandt and Correggio.

In "A Vision Of The Last Judgement," Blake advocates a kind of exorcism which will purge away the likes of Rubens and his excrementitious associates. Blake identifies Venetian artists and, by implication, their Flemish counterparts, with the natural, vegetative world of death and decay as those who must be expelled:

> We are in a World of Generation & death & this world we must cast off if we would be Painters Such as Rafa[e]l Mich Angelo & the Ancient Sculptors. if we do not cast off this world we shall be only Venetian Painters who will be cast off & Lost from Art.
>
> (E562)

Moreover, this exorcism participates in a combined process of projection and introjection which seeks to protect "Life" within a delineated enclave by marginalizing and expelling its opposite. Blake's exorcism thus sets up a binary opposition between life and death which he also articulates as a distinction between truth and error:

> All Life consists of these Two Throwing off Error, ⟨& Knaves from our company⟩ continually & receiving Truth ⟨or Wise Men into our Company⟩ Continually.
>
> (E562)

As in the case of the *pharmakos*, purgation emphasizes the tracing and retracing of a boundary line between the inside and the outside. Truth and wise men are to be gathered in and protected while error and knaves are to be expelled and rejected. Likewise, the line traced by elimination of the *pharmakos* is the intact surface of the clean and proper body or Human Form Divine as Blake seeks to defend its integrity against contamination by the abject. In this case the exorcism creating Blake's aesthetic and epistemological binaries also has a psychoanalytic subtext since it also implicitly describes the processes of rejection and abjection as they expel excrement while erecting the distinction between subject and object. As previously discussed in the first chapter, this polarization is carried out by the castration complex as it supervises the child's entry into the symbolic order.

Yet in constructing this aesthetic version of the symbolic, Blake also hints at its possible subversion. He gives us an indication of this when he specifies how one is to join the company of true artists: "No man can Embrace True Art till he has Explored & Cast out False Art" (E562). Significantly, one must first explore false art before casting it out as knavery and contamination in order to clear and restore the space of true art. Such prior exploration by the true artist suggests a complicity with false art which may still exert an attractive force. Blake implies

that this attraction continues when he repeatedly urges us to cast off false art and embrace true art as exercises which must be carried out over and over again. The continuous and repeated undertaking of this exorcism suggests that the pristine interior of even the true artist is threatened with the possibility of recontamination. In this event, there remains little to distinguish true from false artists except the strenuous effort of casting off and out: an effort false artists seem simply to have given up as being too difficult. Lurking within these observations is a hint that the contaminant "properly" belongs inside, since it is only with the utmost violence that it is purged, and only for brief periods. Hence scapegoats, as representatives of the outside, were regularly granted a "place by the [Athenean] community, chosen, kept, fed, etc.," once calamity befell the city (*Dissemination* 133). In the end, such continuous effort expended in dislodging the *pharmakos* from its "home" will prove too much for Blake. In the midst of attempting yet another dispossession of the *pharmakos*, he becomes indistinguishable from it. Much like the *pharmakos* which is both remedy and poison, resident and alien, or the abject which is both horrendously repulsive and seductive, this move collapses logocentric binaries into a conflictual site.

Mother Outline

An introduction to Blake's difficulties in holding the line against contamination is suggested by a brief satiric verse in which he identifies his masculine outline with the mother and foregrounds her unwillingness to maintain the distinctions ordinarily associated with it:

> O dear Mother outline of knowledge most sage
> Whats the First Part of Painting she said Patronage
> And what is the second to Please & Engage

She frownd like a Fury & said Patronage

And what is the Third she put off Old Age

And smild like s Syren & said Patronage[.]

(E515)

The speaker of this address to "Mother outline" receives but one answer to a series of questions probing the parts of a definition of painting. Her answer, patronage, contains Blake's assessment of this practice as encouraging the mass production of art in factories or mills in which Venetian and Flemish artists exploit the labour power of numerous journeymen. Patronage and mass production, as we have seen, come together in the figure of Rubens as artistic sycophant and capitalist. Although Rose concentrates on Blake's condemnation of Rubens, it is quite clear that Blake himself extends his opprobrious critique to cover the practices of other Venetian and Flemish artists:

> The story that is told in all Lives of the Painters about Correggio being poor and but badly paid for his Pictures, is altogether false; he was a petty Prince, in Italy, and employed numerous Journeymen in manufacturing (as Rubens and Titian did) the Pictures that go under his name. The manual labour in these Pictures of Correggio is immense, and was paid for originally at the immense prices that those who keep manufactories of art always charge their employers [i.e. rich patrons], while they themselves pay their journeymen little enough.
>
> (E548)

These journeymen do not produce original work because they do not follow their own innate vision, but subordinate themselves to the concepts and designs of another. Rather than produce art as good writing or speech in proximity to their own imaginations, they are reduced to the production of imitations as bad writing or the sign of a sign. By advocating patronage, "Mother outline" also advocates

imitation and subverts the function of outline as diaphanous revealer of truth. She thus effectively contaminates speech with writing.

By identifying patronage with the subversive possibilities of writing, I am also foregrounding aspects of the painterly style associated with Rubens to which both Blake and Rose are blind. Rose considers patronage and painterly aesthetics to be artistic analogues of tyranny counteracted by Blake's own style and mode of production. While agreeing with this assessment of the exploitation of journeyman labour as a function of economic tyranny, I also maintain that the painterly style associated with patronage is more complex and conflicted. It may be an aesthetic version of dominance by abstract generalizations for Blake. Yet the association between this form of abstraction and nature as a hostile, dominating, phallic female also opens the door to this female's more subversive and liberating alter ego.

Aside from her lesson on imitation, "Mother outline" disrupts the bounding line in other ways. Her repetitive intonation of "Patronage" fails to distinguish between the parts in a manner which Blake satirizes in another verse:

> These are the Idiots chiefest arts
> To blend & not define the Parts
> . . . . . .
> To make out the parts is the wise man's aim
> But to lose them the Fool makes his foolish Game. . . .
>
> (E513-514)

Instead of producing the clear and distinct definition of parts we might expect from delineation proper, "Mother outline" gives us broken lines and broken forms. Everything is collapsed into the same undifferentiated "Venetian and Flemish Ooze" of patronage and imitation (E513). Moreover, the poem's rhyme scheme duplicates this ooze in that each line ends in the same syllable. As the word "age,"

this syllable is repeated six times, emphasizing a process of decay and decomposition into uniformity. As well, "Mother outline" is configured as either a "Fury" or a "Syren." In either case she persecutes or preys upon men, and in this aesthetic context, cannibalizes the delineated, masculine form. As a Fury, "Mother outline" becomes a Medusa-like avenging female whose snake-entwined hair threatens castration and dismemberment. As a Syren, she is a female monster luring men to their destruction with her enchanting voice. As a composite figure, she becomes transformed into a ferociously angry and malignant phallic-mother through whom energies and flows are released which are capable of destabilizing a phallocentric order. As such a threat, she must be cast off and scapegoated like the Venetian and Flemish painters who are her related *pharmakoi*. Yet "Mother outline" also exhibits characteristics of conflict in her capacity as *pharmakos*.

Judging by what has already been said, one can see that the concept of a firm bounding outline is a conflictual site for Blake. On the one hand, the outline is homologous with speech in its proximity to the signified, and is the privileged term in a phallocentric binary system. Another way of understanding this valorizaton of linear style is to recognize its role in sustaining the centrality of the masculine figure in Blake's iconography. Blake's male, human form divine can be thought of as a metaphoric embodiment of thetic phase development: a way of visualizing the supremacy of a patriarchal symbolic order. That Blake would wish to satirize patronage and its transgressions against the functional role of delineation is understandable. Yet to do so by making outline the advocate of patronage is strange. The uncanniness of such a move produces a conflict in which the outline both establishes and subverts symbolic hierarchies, both protects the purity of vision and contaminates it. In its capacity as *pharmakos*, the outline, in its own way, becomes both remedy and poison.

Moreover, this uncanniness is introduced into Blake's system by the mother as a symbolic figure. By casting her as both Fury and Siren, in his satiric verse, Blake directs our response to her as one of horrific recoil. This reaction is already built into the inherited myths surrounding these female configurations as metaphors of abjection. According to Cixous, both the Fury as Medusa, and the Siren act as virtual totems closing off access to the forbidden, dark continent of maternal *jouissance*. The terrain of this sexual energy has always been off limits because of the threat it poses to phallocentrism as "that enormous machine that has been operating and turning out its 'truth' for centuries" ("Medusa" 249). Patriarchy organizes this quarantine by declaring feminine sexuality as the site of castration and lack, threatening dismemberment to all possible transgressions of this frontier. Hence women have been taught to hate themselves, "to be their own enemies [and] to mobilize their immense strength against themselves" ("Medusa" 248). Exiled to a phallocentric continent "with its monuments to Lack" they are "frozen in . . . place between two terrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss . . . anchored in the dogma of castration" (*Sorties* 68). In citing the Medusa as archetypal totem against female narcissism and self-exploration, Cixous apparently has in mind Freud's brief article on the "horrifying decapitated head of Medusa" as a "terror of castration that is linked to the sight of . . . the female genitals" ("Medusa's Head" 105). Not only does the castration complex denigrate feminine *jouissance*, it also acts as a deterrent against those who might be drawn toward its destabilizing excess, vitality and exuberance.

Blake's choice of the Fury as a totemic figure, set up as a warning and defense on behalf of a patriarchal order, may have its origins in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. According to Froma I. Zeitlin, the *Oresteia* is a "reenactment of the cosmic struggle between Olympian and chthonic forces" as a process ultimately leading to the creation of a structured and ordered world. The civilization that

results from such a conflict between opposing forces is characterized by a hierarchical arrangement placing "Olympian over chthonic on the divine level, Greek over barbarian on the cultural level, and male above female on the social level" (47). Yet all of the juridical, theological, familial and conjugal concerns raised by the tragedy can be subsumed by the male-female, binary conflict which acts as a "central metaphor" organizing "the other issues and attract[ing] them to its magnetic field." The edifice of the Aeschylean cosmos thus "stands squarely within the misogynistic tradition which pervades Greek thought . . . relating the mastery of the female to higher social goals." Likewise, the *Oresteia* forms part of the foundation of Western phallocentric thought whose gender-coded metaphors also find their way into Blake's aesthetic theory and poetry. As Zeitlin succinctly observes, "If Aeschylus is concerned with world-building, the cornerstone of his architecture is the control of woman" (48). Similarly, Blake's own cosmology in *The Four Zoas* has Urizen, as master builder, construct a universe on the basis of female repression.

Clytemnestra is the trilogy's initial representative of the subversive, chthonic and female threat to the symbolic order. As a "shrewd intelligent rebel against the masculine regime" she is "allied with the archaic, primitive, and regressive" and becomes "monstrous" in her usurpation of "male power and prerogatives" (49). Moreover, Clytemnestra initiates her rebellion within the precincts of conjugal domesticity where it is assumed that the wife will submit to her husband. Not only does she murder Agamemnon and take Aegisthus as her lover, she also mixes her personal vendetta with a desire to rule. Yet since "women are not fit to rule [and are] basically unruly" this turn of events represents a fundamental disruption at the heart of a patriarchal economy (50). Like the *pharmakos* "she is the threat from within the system" and presents a "persistent but normally dormant power which may always erupt into open violence" (53,50).

Hence her "massacre of the male" signifies a rejecton of female subordination at all metaphorical levels and poses "the threat of extinction to human society as a whole" (51).

Orestes' retaliatory matricide on behalf of his father and the patriarchal order, however, is not a simple, straightforward, restorative measure. His victory over Clytemnestra does not

> result in the defeat of the female and in the curtailment of her power. Far from it. The murder of the mother evokes a renewed and redoubled power, exemplified now in a proliferation of negative female images of supernatural origin.
>
> (56)

These images or "serpentine Furies," prompted into action by Clytemnestra's death, "make visible the metaphors of female monstrosity which have been associated with Clytemnestra from the beginning" (56,62). In amplifying the horror of feminine subversion identified with Clytemnestra, the Furies turn her characterization as *pharmakos* into a stark configuration of the phallic mother who dismembers the thetic contours of the child's body while also castrating male, paternalistic power:

> For the devouring voracity of the Furies, the incarnations of Clytemnestra, who would pursue and suck the blood from their living victim, represents both oral aggression against the child they should nourish and sexual predation against the male to whom they should submit.
>
> (56)

As contaminating *pharmakos* and dismembering phallic mother, the Furies are well on their way to becoming everything which patriarchy should repress and avoid. Finally, these "deepest fantasies of buried masculine terrors" augment their sadistic vampirism by also becoming forms of abjection: "Repulsive in physical

appearance, they drip and ooze from every orifice; even their breath, their words, their thoughts drop poison" (56 57). As fury and collective *pharmakos*, phallic mother and abject, Mother outline presents a formidable barrier to anyone lured by the prospect of subverting masculine delineation.

Corresponding to the Medusa/Fury, as totem, we have the female metaphor of Siren, ensuring the sexual economy of the symbolic order as a circulation from and to the phallus. According to Cixous, the myth of Ulysses vs. the Sirens revolves around fear of castration and dismemberment. Although Ulysses is the archetypal explorer of Western culture, his wanderings never allow him to remain in the company of women and their dark *jouissance*. That is one area he will never steadfastly map. Instead, he returns home to himself, in a circuitous journey meant to reassure patriarchy of its own supremacy by resisting and subjugating woman as 'other.' This process begins as a resistance to the threatening lure of the siren's song as a defense against castration. Hence Ulysses is

> The Winner: the one who was saved, the homecoming man! Always returning to himself–in spite of the most fantastic detours. The Loaner [loner]: loaning himself to women and never giving himself except to the ideal image of Ulysses, bringing his inalterable resistence home to his hot-shot little phallic rock . . . How banal! To resist the Sirens, he ties himself up! to a mast! a little phallus and a big phallus too. . . .
>
> (*Sorties* 74)

The journey of Ulysses is always away from himself and back to himself as the one who possesses the phallus. It is an adventure which leaves the security of the "phallic rock," to risk its potential loss, only to return home to the phallus in knowledge that one has circumvented the greatest dangers. Cixous refers to this dynamic as the empire of the selfsame produced by "the subject's going out into the other *in order to come back* to itself" (*Sorties* 78). As part of this process,

woman, as 'other,' exists only to be combatted, overpowered and appropriated so that Man can return to himself, reassured and greater. By securing his phallus and himself, Man sets up an economy governed by "a certain kind of savings" and conservation (*Sorties* 80). Also, his circulation within the circuit of the selfsame subjugates women and sets up another economic circulation marking them as exchange value. Castration not only outlaws feminine *jouissance* but also circumscribes its threatening power within the circuits of a symbolic sexual economy.

Blake's identification of "Mother outline" as both Fury/Medusa and Siren taps into the prohibitions analyzed by Zeitlin's analysis and Cixous in her theoretical fictions. As an advocate of patronage, she is strictly off limits to the visionary artist and threatens castration as a consequence of possible transgressions into Venetian and Flemish art. She thus acts as a totem on behalf of the symbolic order, ensuring the gender-coded hierarchies of Blake's aesthetic theory and the contours of a male, clean and proper body or Human Form Divine. She is invested with paternal function as an agent of the Law. Yet the conflict surrounding her identity as "Mother outline" is duplicated within her identity as Siren. Although the Siren, like the Medusa, threatens dismemberment and consequently horrifies, there is also something about her voice which is seductive. After all, Ulysses must lash himself to his phallic mast! By employing the female metaphor of Siren Blake also suggests the simultaneous repulsive and attractive features of "Mother outline" as a configuration of abjection. Unlike Ulysses, Blake will give in to her song as an oralization of anal sadistic drive motility. Its notes will be sounded in the undecidable logic of his theory, when its binaries give way to "a type of exchange in which each one would keep the *other* alive and different" (*Sorties* 79).

"Mother outline" not only "speaks" in Blake's small satiric verse, but also has her "say" in his aesthetic theory as what Alice Jardine calls a gynetic-effect. Beginning with the gender-coded terms of a phallocentric order, Jardine argues that a specifically feminine and maternal textual dynamic can breach this master narrative and circulate its binary terms as "a woman-in-effect that is never stable and has no identity" (*Gynesis* 25). This woman-as-verb differs from woman as noun, and is defined through the neologism *gynesis*: a process tending toward a horizon or zone of undecidability conceptualized as a *gynema*. In this way Jardine retains the femaleness of this subversive space without calcifying it within the frozen, hierarchical relations of gender decidability. My own way of rewriting Jardine's *gynesis* is to spell feminine with an *e* instead of an *i*. Just as the *gynema* is a uniquely subversive female space collapsing gender-coded binaries into each other, my own neologism embeds "men" within "fe(men)ine" as a way of signifying the oscillating bisexuality of this woman-in-effect. Finally, Derrida's own analysis of phallocentrism produces a context for Jardine, who calls his concept of the hymen a "privileged figure" (191). As the "membrane of the female vaginal tract" the hymen signifies virginity yet, as the god of marriage, the word also implies copulation (190). Taken in its entirety, then, "hymen" becomes a metaphor of undecidability as "the abolition of the difference between difference and nondifference" (190). This fe(men)ine logic is similar to the relationship J. Hillis Miller describes between "host" and "parasite." On the one hand the conceptual system of the host/parasite relationship resolves itself into a binary opposition in which the host is valorized over the parasite. On the other hand the host and parasite also contain each other as part of their respective definitions. Consequently each term moves towards its negation across a differentiating membrane which continues to separate them. This membrane both joins and divides in a relationship which is neither synthetic nor exclusive. Also,

undecidability subverts hierarchy by making it impossible for either term to function as a firm resting place and end point of analysis (Miller 252).

By characterizing the conflictual dynamic released by "Mother outline" as a gynetic effect, I am relying primarily on the conceptual apparatus of Derridean deconstruction. Jardine's *gynema* is, first and foremost, a zone of undecidability, scrambling the gender-coded hierarchies of phallocentrism into a space which is nevertheless fe(men)ine, and in this case, maternal. The *gynema* is thus closely related to *differance*, the hymen and the *pharmakos*, all of which are interchangeable terms for the same uncanny process. Yet throughout this chapter I have repeatedly tried to show how a deconstruction of phallocentrism might also be construed as a subversion of the symbolic. Hence I have represented the gender-coded interpenetration of deconstructed binaries as homologous with the conflict between the semiotic chora and the symbolic order. This latter conflict is also gender-coded since the symbolic is a function of the Name-of-the-Father while the chora is largely dominated by the child's incestuous relationship with the mother. Based, in part, upon these analogies and some of Kristeva's observations on the affinity between her own concepts and Derrida's, such comparisons can be made between deconstruction and the dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic. Moreover, Kristeva's descriptions of this dialectic, as either a signifying process or what Freud understands as negation, are quite similar to Derridean undecidability. The remainder of this chapter will reinforce these conceptual connections in the context of an approach to the self-subversions of Blake's aesthetic theory.

Up until now I have relied solely on such comparison, analogy and homology in order to construct what might seem like a theoretical hybrid, attempting to graft Derrida and Kristeva onto each other. Yet an argument can be made for a more organic connection between these two theorists. This line of

reasoning begins by observing that gender undecidability is a fundamental feature of psychoanalysis. Jardine observes that at its historical inception "psychoanalysis was founded as a science on *woman*–that is, on women hysterics" (159). Yet Freud also remarks on how the male child is always taken as the subject of his investigations. Moreover, the "fact that psychoanalytic discourse seems unable to exist outside this *oscillation* between the female body and the male subject" is itself an aspect of hysteria (161; emphasis added). An hysteric seizure can "express sexual sensations characteristic for a person of the opposite sex with whom the patient has identified." Jerking convulsions in the arms of a woman may portray the spasmodic contractions of the penis during ejaculation. Likewise, an hysteric woman's sneezing spells may originate in her nose as a fantasied penis (Fenichel 218). Consequently psychoanalysis is hysterical in its epistemological origins: a condition generated by the dialectic of gender undecidability between its object (hysterical women) and the conceptual schema used to analyze it (male subjectivity).

If psychoanalysis is hysterical, one wonders how it might relate to the hysterical texts discovered by Derrida in the special sense of being "unsure of their sex and iconoclastic to the extreme" (Jardine 161). In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva supplies us with an answer, remarking "that the psychoanalytic discovery paves the way, in a certain sense, for grammatology itself" (143). She argues that the Derridean concept of *differance* as (gender) undecidability can be traced back to the conflict between the pleasure and reality principles. From what we have already seen, the pleasure and reality principles are part of the heterogeneous and conflictual process of rejection. On the one hand, the anal sadistic pleasure of rejection is repressed by the symbolic and clearly differentiated from rejection's subsequent creation of reality. During the preoedipal phase, the child's anality also doubles as pleasure vis à vis the mother's

breast. Both oral and anal sadism are determined by the same drive motility. With paternal intervention, however, the child is separated from both the mother's breast and feces. As determinate objects, no longer contained within the child's pleasure ego, breast and feces become the foundation of reality, making symbolization and reality testing possible. Simply put, the clear distinction between pleasure and reality can also be conceptualized as the difference between preoedipal and Oedipal, semiotic and symbolic, *mother* and *father*. Yet in spite of this difference, oralization makes it possible for anal sadistic pleasure to resurface and interpenetrate the representation of the real. In other words, the preoedipal maternal function crosses the barrier erected by the symbolic while the barrier remains, for the most part, intact.

This uncanny dynamic, in which a barrier is erected and simultaneously perforated, is explained by Kristeva as an instance of what Freud calls *Verneinung* or negation: a process which simultaneously maintains repression while momentarily lifting it. According to Freud, it allows uncor cious material i. to consciousness which would otherwise be repressed, and does this without totally removing the repression. An example of this is a remark made to you which could be interpreted as an insult, although the person who made it sincerely denies any intention of wanting to insult you. Negation often manifests itself in treatment as a way of letting material surface past the censor (without eliminating it) as a step towards the acceptance and verbalization of certain ideas. Thus the postoedipal interaction of the semiotic and the symbolic can be read as something like a palimpsest with an erased, unconscious script still legible beneath the superimposed inscription of the symbolic. Following in the tradition of Freud and Lacan, Kristeva claims that negation is primarily a linguistic phenomenon:

> The appearance of the symbol of negation in the signifier thus partially liberates repression and introduces into the signifier a part of what remains outside the symbolic order: what was repressed and what Freud calls 'affective.' These are instinctual, corporeal foundations stemming from the concrete history of the concrete (biological, familial, social) subject . . . it *marks signifying material* with the repressed.
>
> (*Revolution* 162-163)

For Kristeva, the best example of this process in action can be discovered in the "prosody and rhythmic timbers" of poetry (163). Yet I would argue that it can also be found in the satire of Blake's poem addressed to "Mother outline." As a satiric verse directed against the practices of patronage, the poem turns "Mother outline" into a totemic figure, safeguarding the firm bounding outline between true and false art, the pure and the impure, the body and its dismemberment/decomposition, and finally, the symbolic and the semiotic. Although she appears to advocate patronage, her configuration as Fury and Siren discourages such practice. Moreover, Blake's choice of these female metaphors, when read in the context of his ambivalence towards the feminine, is charged by a psychoanalytic subtext. With the help of Freud and Cixous, we can understand these mythological figures as repressive censors acting as agents of the Law. Yet Blake's characterization of "Mother outline" as a representative of *both* outline *and* patronage introduces a conflictual dynamic into the poem homologous with the process of negation. On the one hand, the irony in the poem can be read as a process in which "Mother outline" *appears* to advocate patronage while *really* discouraging it. This is tantamount to erecting a barrier against it. Yet there are other ironies in the poem which work against this. Chief among these is the fact that it is *outline* which becomes the apparent advocate of patronage. In a word, outline, in order to defend itself, takes on the appearance of everything it opposes

in order to discourage those practices. But in doing so, does it not at the same time practise the "knavery" which Blake also distinguishes from the "hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty" and "honesty"? In resorting to a kind of ironic deception, in order to defend itself, does outline not immediately become what it seeks to defend against? Although one might want to argue that "Mother outline" only *appears* to advocate patronage as a piece of satire, this resorting to semblance and trickery undermines it at once. Consequently one could just as easily say that "Mother outline" *appears* to advocate delineation while *really* acting as the sponsor of patronage and all of its evils. By refusing us a firm resting place of analysis, this double irony turns "Mother outline" as an agent of patronage into an advocate of outline while simultaneously turning this advocacy (of outline) into a form of patronage and the painterly methods associated with it. Her totemic appearance seeks to cordon patronage off from outline yet also collapses them into each other. Hence the barrier which the poem satirically erects against patronage is simultaneously breached in a conflictual dynamic which is homologous with the other conflictual structures so far discussed including abjection and the signifying process. Finally the psychological processes listed above function, for Kristeva, as the material preconditions for what deconstruction identifies, in various ways as the logic of undecidability. As a conflict between the pleasure and reality principles these dynamics are

> A heterogeneous energy discharge, whose every principle is that of scission and division [which] enters into contradiction with what has been traced, but produces only flashes, ruptures, and sudden displacements, which constitute preconditions for *new* symbolic productions in which the economy of *differance* will be able to find its place as well.
>
> (*Revolution* 145)

In short, it is the undecidable relations between consciousness and the unconscious which function at the root of the conceptual aporias discovered by deconstruction.

Aside from firm, bounding outlines, Blake's other prophylactic is the use of watercolour as opposed to oil. In "A Descriptive Catalogue" Blake often univocally affirms "Clean colours unmudded by oil, and firm and determinate lineaments unbroken by shadows" (E530). Oil is excrementitious and is figuratively cast, by Blake, as a decaying corpse. As a form of infection, both abject and *pharmakos*, it can only be purified through the use of water colour.

Given the emphasis and clarity of Blake's aesthetic theory, and the binaries it articulates, it is a curious comment on his artistic practice that he is unable to execute his ideas in several paintings designed specifically to exemplify them. As part of his 1809 exhibition, there are three paintings designated by him as "experiment Picture[s]" because they are "painted . . . for experiment on colours, without any oily vehicle" (E547). One would expect them to be exceptional in clarity of colour and firmness of outline. Yet they are, in his words, "laboured to a superabundant blackness," taking on the excremental appearance he so ardently seeks to purge away. At the very moment when Blake's execution should be impeccable, it is marred by what he calls "blotting and blurring demons" (E546).

The malevolent influence of these demons ruins the experiment picture which Blake entitles "Satan calling up his Legions." "This Picture" he says

> was likewise painted at intervals, for experiment on colours, without any oily vehicle, it may be worthy of attention, not only on account of its composition but of the great labour which has been bestowed upon it, that is, three or four times as much as would have finished a more perfect Picture; the labour has destroyed the lineaments. . . .
>
> (E547)

Blake attributes his failure to the "temptations and perturbations, labouring to destroy Imaginative power, by means of that infernal machine, called Chiaro Oscuro, in the hands of Venetian and Flemish demons" (E547). Moreover, these demons "by entering into disease and excrement . . . possess themselves of the bodies of mortal men, and shut the door of mind and thought" (E546). In the very act of casting these "Venetian and Flemish demons" out, as both the *pharmakos* and abject, the purity and integrity of Blake's interiority is simultaneously reinfected and contaminated. Stated otherwise, Blake's practice duplicates the structure of negation in that the exclusive use of watercolour, as a remedy exorcizing these demons by erecting a barrier against them also reproduces and introduces, through its own excess, the poison he wishes to purge. Hence, instead of clarity and delineation we have a uniformity of colouring and lighting identified by Blake as the mingled clearness of and obscurity of chiaroscuro. Through his own claim of being possessed, Blake uses a metaphor of psychological disorder and madness to enact the primal fear entertained by logocentrism, of an unpredictable breaking and eruption of the outside within the inside. While doing this, he also inadvertently employs the ambiguity present within the definition of the *pharmakos*. As both remedy and poison, the *pharmakos* defines the very uncanniness, rediscovered by Blake, of ingesting a remedy only to poison oneself again.

Blake's demoniacal possession also compels him to practise the kind of imitation he abhors as a derivative and inferior sign of a superior sign. These demons "put the original Artist in fear and doubt of his own original conception," they make it impossible for him to execute "without a model," and consequently the memory of "Pictures of the various Schools possess[es] his mind, instead of appropriate execution" (E547). Finally possession and contamination are so complete that one becomes the scapegoated poison, or abject, itself: "like walking

in another man's style, or speaking or looking in another man's style and manner, [with the abject] . . . tormenting the true Artist, till he leaves the Florentine and adopts the Venetian practice . . ." (E547). In linguistic terms, the pure interiority of speech has itself become the contaminated exteriority of writing. In gender terms, the male binary term has become female. In the psychoanalytic context provided by Kristeva, we have the advent of a signifying process brought on by the eruption of the semiotic within the symbolic.

All of these corresponding processes, however, are not yet complete. In a deconstructive context, Blake's text will not become a *gynema* or zone of undecidability until it enacts a second reversal, reproducing the effects of the hymen or the uncanny logic of host/parasite relations. As J. Hillis Miller observes, a deconstructive analysis reveals a "strange necessity" in which the terms of a binary opposition

> turn into one another. Each crosses over into its apparent negation or opposite. If the word 'deconstruction' names the procedure of criticism, and 'oscillation' the impasse reached through that procedure, 'undecidability' names the experience of [this] ceaseless . . . movement. . . .
>
> (252)

We have already seen how this works in "Mother outline" with respect to the opposition between patronage and delineation. It is my belief that the same dynamic can be observed functioning between Blake's binaries of water colour and oil. Blake has already revealed how water colour, as an agent of delineation and analogue of speech in his phonocentric aesthetics, effectively becomes oil paint or, in Derridean terms, writing. To complete the ceaseless movement described by Miller, oil paint must in some sense be shown to exhibit the characteristics of water colour. In this sense, oil as a form of 'writing' must itself become water colour or a form of 'speech'. Likewise, the gender code marking these binaries also

requires that the female become male. Finally, signifying process presupposes that the symbolic, in some sense, remain intact, even though it is inundated by sadistic drive motility.

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva discusses this characteristic of signifying process in terms structurally homologous with the logic of undecidability. J. Hillis Miller's analysis of such a zone demonstrates how each term, both host and parasite, functions as the precondition of the other. This is exactly how Kristeva describes the signifying process as a relationship between anal sadistic pleasure or the semiotic, and the symbolic as that which creates and represents reality. On the one hand the semiotic is "a precondition of the symbolic." Yet this primacy is qualified by Kristeva as "a *theoretical supposition* justified by the need for description" (68). In actual practice, the semiotic can only be discovered as a transgression of the symbolic and requires the symbolic break in order to be isolated as preliminary. The symbolic can thus be taken as a necessary precondition of the semiotic since it provides the ground against which the semiotic appears as a force capable of pulverizing a subject who has aleady been positioned. In other words, as soon as the semiotic erupts, it simultaneously declares its own primacy as a repressed substratum *and* the primacy of the symbolic within the order of discovery. The signifying process thus becomes homologous with undecidability since "the text offers itself as the dialectic of two heterogeneous operations that are, reciprocally and inseparably, preconditions for each other" (66). While establishing the interdependence of these binaries as mutual preconditions, the eruption of the semiotic also turns the barrier erected by repression into a hymenal membrane which simultaneously fuses and divides the semiotic and symbolic. One could not reproduce the dynamics of deconstruction with greater accuracy!

The second series of reversals mentioned above are all simultaneously enacted when oil becomes the medium of choice for Blake in safeguarding vision, imagination and delineation. Rather than act as an agent of contamination, oil now protects the clean and proper body, and its interiority, against the ravages of an invading exteriority. This aspect of a gynetic oscillation is set in motion once we consider a series of letters on the topic of Blake's proposals for a painting commissioned by the clergyman, Dr. Trusler, in 1799. Having received instructions from Dr. Trusler for a painting, Blake confesses that he must rely upon his own "independence" rather than "slavishly following the track of another however admirable that track may be" (E701). Thus Blake begins by situating himself, once again, in his phonocentric hierarchy, preferring originality and proximity to imagination over the derivative and inferior practices of imitation. As part of the topos of originality, Blake disclaims total credit for his designs and attributes them instead to inspiration. Blake is in direct and immediate contact with the muse who "governs his Song" and with the Lord who commands him to "speak good or bad" (E701). In both cases, voice and speech are privileged by being in proximity to the source, as opposed to the productions of a rank and inferior kind of imitation. Stated otherwise, Blake has taken up residence in the halls of Los. Consequently Blake's art is "True Painting" while Dr. Trusler's "Eye is perverted by Caricature Prints" or absurd and inferior copies (E702-703). Finally, that Blake's art presupposes the firm outline of the body is indicated by his comment to Cumberland that Trusler expects him to "paint Dirty rags & old shoes where [he] ought to place Naked Beauty" (E73). From all of this one would expect Blake to suggest water-colour as the medium of choice. Yet his actual suggestions to Trusler come as something of a shock:

> If you approve of my Manner & it is agreeable to you I would rather Paint Pictures *in oil* of the same dimensions than make Drawings. & on the same

> terms. by this means you will have a number of Cabinet pictures. which I flatter myself will not be unworthy of a Scholar of Rembrandt & Teniers, whom I have Studied no less than Rafael & Michael angelo. . . .
>
> (E 701; emphasis added)

As we have seen, Blake is beset by contradictions between the many revolutionary gestures of his work and his more Urizenic tendencies, especially those towards system and gender-coded hierarchies. The inherent phallocentrism of his aesthetic theory is one example of these tendencies. Another way of discussing this contradiction is to see his liberating gestures as being complicit with those ways of oppressing and repressing characteristic of the symbolic order. Throughout this section I have read Blake *through* the combined optics of deconstruction and psychoanalysis. I have endeavoured to show how numerous the intersections between Derrida and Kristeva are, and ultimately, how one could argue for a kind of theoretical union between them. To be sure, it is Blake's text which first suggested this union and, in a certain sense, demanded it as the only appropriate critical response to his conflicted female figure. In the first chapter we saw how this figure is split between an affirmation of incestuous maternal contact and its prohibition by a phallic mother in league with the paternal function. We also saw how this conflict was finally dealt with by the creation of a myth which subordinated, circumscribed and absorbed the female while elevating, freeing and celebrating the male. In this second chapter I have attempted to show how this subordination of the female expresses itself in the context of Blake's aesthetic theory, as a gender-coded system of binary terms arranged into clear hierarchies. On the one hand the conflicted female figure is marginalized as *pharmakos*, abject, and painterly artistic traditions. Yet it is at this point that the *pharmakos*/abject uses its conflictual status to set in motion an uncanny process which subverts the very effort at scapegoating it. A key element in this move is the way in which the

pharmakos/abject contains within itself a duplication of the very structure which seeks to exclude it. Hence "Mother outline," as Fury/Medusa/Siren, both prohibits and affirms gender-coded painterly methods in ways which are ultimately undecidable. Moreover, this process gets repeated in the larger structure of Blake's aesthetic theory transforming its phallocentric binaries into a *gynema*, zone of undecidability or signifying process. In spite of Blake's contradictions and complicity with the symbolic order, the abject/*pharmakos* he seeks to marginalize returns to disrupt system, and scramble its ideological structures of oppression.

Notes

[1]The distinction between linear and painterly styles of art is taken from Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles Of Art History*. Blake's observations on the differences between the art of Florence and Rome as opposed to that of Venice and Flanders anticipates Wölfflin's analysis with remarkable accuracy. Consequently one can use Wölfflin's terminology in the context of Blake's aesthetic theory.

Specifically, Wölfflin uses these two terms as one of five pairs of concepts generated by his study of the differences which "lead from the style of the sixteenth century to that of the seventeenth." With respect to the transition from linear to painterly art, Wölfflin formulates this development in the following way:

> The development from the linear to the painterly, i.e. the development of line as the path of vision and guide of the eye, and the gradual depreciation of line: in more general terms, the perception of the object by its tangible character--in *outline* and surfaces--on the one hand, and on the other, a perception which is by way of surrendering itself to the mere visual appearance and can abandon "tangible" design. In the former case the stress is laid on the limits of things; in the other the work tends to look limitless. Seeing by volumes and *outlines* isolates objects: for the painterly eye, they merge. In the one case interest lies more in the perception of individual material objects as solid, tangible bodies; in the other, in the apprehension of the world as a shifting semblance.
>
> (14; emphasis added)

[2]In *The Mirror and the Lamp* Abrams summarizes the central tendency of the expressive theory of art as "the internal made external" (22). Rather than

merely imitate aspects of the universe as in the mimetic orientation, the work "ceases . . . to be regarded primarily as a reflection of nature" and becomes a transparent mirror, not only held up to nature but also yielding "insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself" (23). In Goethe's case, the mirror is apparently not so much a transparent medium but is reversed and held up to the mind instead of nature. The mimetic orientation is maintained but is altered to reveal the poet's interior, externalizing it.

[3]This brief discussion on the ambiguities inherent in the use of such terms as 'presence,' 'materiality,' and 'empirical' is a simplified version of Heidegger's analysis of the origins of Western metaphysics. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger suggests a reason why 'material' and 'empirical' still retain semantic residues of presence even though the idealist tradition seeks to enshrine presence solely within the *idea*.

Originally, the *polemos* of Heraclitus, as conflict or struggle, is prior to everything human and divine. It causes "the realm of being to separate into opposites," establishing position, order and rank within the world so that things (i.e. essents) come to a stand in relation to one another (62). It is this "elemental . . . [and] original world-making power," by which things come into being, that the Greeks understand as *physis* (62-63). More specifically, *physis* "is the emerging power, the standing-there-in-itself, [and] stability"of a thing (182). The activity of *physis* conquers and creates space for itself and brings-itself-to-stand out in the open. As a standing-out-of-unconcealment *physis* discloses itself and stands-in-the-light of its own radiant appearance, sitting and resting in its enduring manifestation. In the nonphilosophical language of everyday speech, the self-revealing drive of *physis* might best be understood as a form of growth which includes both the process of development and its resulting end product. Once the

activity of *physis* completes itself, the entity resides within its own "standing presence" or *parousia* which is how the Greeks interpret Being.

With the advent of the *idea*, however, *physis* is reinterpreted in terms of essence and existence. In a very important sense, the *idea* or *eidos* comes after the fact and encounters that which is already standing-there insofar as it presents a front, view, aspect, surface of appearance to be looked at. While *physis* considers a being's appearance to be an inherent emerging power and stability; the *eidos* or *idea* considers a being's appearance only when the activity of development reaches completion, and only insofar as the completed being encounters vision (183). *Physis* opens up a space which the *idea* "merely circumscribes and measures" (183). Yet with Plato, it is the latter sense of appearing which "makes the thing . . . [since] . . . vision becomes decisive, instead of the thing itself" (183). It is the primacy which Plato confers upon vision which leads to a reinterpretation of *physis* as appearance from a thing's self-revelation to the way in which this revelation is perceived. Being-seen alone now determines the presence and stability of the thing as its whatness or essence. In other words, vision discloses *what* is offered in the appearance of *what* confronts us, and also *that* something introduces itself to us and places itself before us (180). As soon as this distinction between *what* something is and *that* it is occurs, these terms are organized into a hierarchy:

> Being as *idea* is exalted, it becomes true being, while being itself, previously dominant, is degraded to . . . what really should not be and really *is* not, because in the realization it always deforms the idea, the pure appearance, by incorporating it in matter. The *idea* now becomes a *paradeigma*, a model. At the same time, the idea necessarily becomes an ideal. The copy actually "is" not; it merely partakes of being . . . the cleft, has opened

between the idea as what really is, the prototype and archetype, and what actually is not, the copy and image.

(184)

Because of this crucial conceptual shift, the stability and endurance of *physis*, its *parousia*, and its presence, becomes appropriated by the *idea* as a function solely of the whatness which *physis* sets before us. Consequently the pre-eminent meaning of *physis*, as a self-manifesting power, becomes relegated to the mere appearance of a that-ness which is illusion and deficiency. If a sense of something tangible, concrete or present can still be discerned within the empirical, in spite of its deficiency, it is in all likelihood a trace remaining from the original experience of *physis*.

[4]In other words, what happens in the case of Blake's eidetic images or 'hallucinated' visionary heads is that the "mental and emotional states" represented by *pathos formulae*, or the "spiritual powers" displayed by one's physiognomy, *are themselves* delineated images. Strictly speaking, the philosophical idealism inherent in theories of physiognomy *and* the use of *pathos formulae* calls for the visual representation of invisible states. Yet Blake's improvisation does not deviate significantly from phonocentrism since he reproduces the patterns of mimēsis which contribute to its structure. In this sense, Blake's drawn visionary heads become copies in much the same way as speech can be thought of as a "psychic painting."

[5]Several of these critics have already been discussed in note 7. To them one can also add Leopold Damrosch who comments on Oothoon's Urizenic turn of phrase when she proposes to use nets and traps in the service of free love while having earlier cited them as tools of priestly oppression (197). Likewise Tilottama Rajan observes of Oothoon that

To oppose the designation of women as private property by becoming a procuress is hardly liberated behaviour even in terms of the ethic dubiously described as 'free love.' Not only does Oothoon still conceive herself as an instrument of male pleasure; she also visits on other women a version of her own fate.

(247)

CHAPTER THREE

THE FOUR ZOAS

Introduction

Psychological versus Psychoanalytic Treatment

The Four Zoas is a poem which cries out for psychoanalytic as distinct from purely psychological interpretation. Unfortunately the major trend in the criticism of this poem has resisted this approach even though critics cite its psychological content and acknowledge the presence of disturbing material within its pages. Given Harold Bloom's use of Freud in his theory of poetry and literary influence, his dismissal of psychoanalysis in reference to *The Four Zoas* comes as something of a surprise. His one allusion to Freud, in his discussion of Night VI, explains the absence of psychoanalysis from the subsequent discussion. He cites *The Visionary Company* as an earlier text in which he interprets the alliance between Urthona's Spectre and Tharmas against Urizen and in defense of Orc. The episode is read allegorically as an alliance of the ego and the id in protection of the libido against the repressive manipulations of the superego. Yet in *Blake's Apocalypse* he revises what he feels is his earlier oversimplification. His first approach

> As a rough bringing-together of Blake and Freud [may have] had some suggestive value, but it now seems to [be] another unnecessary reduction of Blake's poetic mythology into mental figures less imaginative than Blake's own very subtle ones.
>
> (263-64)

In dealing with the poem Bloom implicitly acknowledges its inherent psychological nature when he describes Albion as its "hero" and casts him as archetypal Man "who contains . . . a fourfold balance of the *faculties* of intellect, imagination, emotion and the instinct that holds the first three *faculties* together in the unsundered harmony of organized Innocence" (203, 205; emphasis added). Albion is a psychic entity whom Bloom describes in the language of faculty psychology. As a unified-mind system of psychology, the faculties were identified by such early figures as St. Thomas Aquinas but were probably introduced to Blake through the influence of such eighteenth-century contemporaries as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. For these founders of the Scottish or so-called Common Sense School, the faculties were discussed "as the capacity of the soul to carry out *in a unified manner* certain psychological activities" (Capretta 27; emphasis added). This emphasis on unity is taken up by Blake in the character of Albion while the Zoas themselves personify the faculties of reason (Urizen), the passions (Luvah), instinct (Tharmas) and imagination (Urthona). Finally the activity of the faculties requires consciousness as an "essential prerequisite" (Kantor 153). Hence Bloom's discussion of *The Four Zoas* already assumes the irrelevance of the unconscious for an understanding of the poem.

What Bloom does with this approach is to read *The Four Zoas* as an allegory of what Blake hopes will happen in the mind of the reader as he or she reads the poem. For Bloom, "Intellectual battle is the subject matter of Blake's epic, the staple of its action" (208). Such conflict embraces both the struggle of the fallen Zoas with each other and the warfare they celebrate once redeemed as coequal partners in the strife of imagination. As far as Bloom is concerned, the reader should imitate this process and emerge from an engagement with the poem in possession of unified and roused faculties. Even though Bloom's reading is psychological it is not psychoanalytic. Nevertheless when he mentions "the

horrors of sundered life" as an aspect of the poem, he catches a glimpse of a disturbing element which, if pursued, would reveal a series of violent sexual fantasies unexplained by his own reading (215).

Frye's reading of the poem also turns it into a psychodrama in which the Zoas are "the four levels of consciousness" (*Symmetry* 276). The coequal partnership of Eden is undermined, however, with the appearance of a stereotypically feminine natural life:

> a life uncontrolled by conscious design, and which can sustain itself only by preying on other [masculine] forms of life, a tangled web of mutual murder. (279)

In other words, it is Albion "as the body of the God-Man who has been torn to pieces" in this strife between the Zoas themselves and the dialectic of dismemberment between Zoas and their female counterparts (287). Frye summarizes the narrative of *The Four Zoas* as follows: "the first four Nights describe the Fall . . . and the next four are concerned with human history and the sharpening of the opposition between the evolution of Los and the cycle of Orc" (303). Moreover, this latter opposition polarizes the conflict between the growing power of a redeemed imagination and the forces of a tyrannical Antichrist seeking to enslave it. Finally this conflict reaches an apocalyptic pitch in Night IX with the great consummation, a "great communion feast in which human life is reintegrated into its real form" (290). As part of this redemption, the feminine natural world must also be redeemed:

> Man must now recover, in order, the world of Luvah or unfallen Generation, the eternal soil, and the world of Tharmas or Beulah, the eternal garden. As this represents the recovery of innocence, a long and very beautiful interlude in pastoral symbolism deals with it. (307)

Frye implies that the renewal of Luvah and Tharmas also involves the corresponding regeneration of Vala and Enion. Bloom is more explicit when discussing the pastoral interlude of Vala's Garden Scene in Night IX and specifically mentions the "regenerate Vala" as she "leads her flocks to a riverbank, and there sees a vision that is the redeeming contrary to her earlier narcissism" (*Apocalypse* 300). For Bloom this narcissism is the autonomy of an independent natural world which persists in its alienaton from an imagination it seeks to dominate. Vala's redemption and reunification with Luvah is repeated by Enion who reunites with Tharmas "in the hope that the Experience of sundering, once surmounted, will protect [them] forever from a second fall" (*Apocalypse* 301). Hence Bloom and Frye agree in their readings insofar as the poem's narrative culminates in an apocalyptic scene of ultimate redemptive closure. They also agree on the psychological interpretation of this process as a dynamic occurring within consciousness, while avoiding psychoanalytic excursions into either Blake's unconscious or the text's. Both, however, mention the horror and violence associated with the fallen condition only briefly. These fleeting references constitute a kind of repression in which they refuse to acknowledge the extreme and excessively perverse nature of the fantasies contained in the poem. It is a repression reinforced by their psychological approach which automatically excludes the possibility that the poem may possess the 'depth' of an unconscious subtext. To explore the poem's scenes of horrific violence, is to discover forces at work in the text which disrupt these sanitized versions of it.

Wilkie and Johnson's *Blake's 'Four Zoas' : The Design of a Dream* continues to read the poem as an allegory of psychological processes. They situate Blake in a tradition shared by his fellow Romantics, which has its origins in Milton's "internalizing [of] epic heroism." Hence "Albion, the Zoas, and their Emanations represent *deliberate* and *conscious* personifications by Blake of forces

in the human psyche and in the world" (4; emphasis added). While agreeing with the view that the poem repudiates psychoanalytic treatment, they expand upon Frye and Bloom by extending the poem's allegory to include references to the historical situation of Blake's England. The "basic psychodramatic method of the poem" is maintained yet expanded "to include political, social and religious commentary" (4). Nevertheless they only gesture in this direction and do not deal extensively with the poem's historical allegory as do other critics discussed in more detail below.

In describing the dynamics of the fallen condition, Wilkie and Johnson come closer to acknowledging the presence of psychoanalytic forces than either Bloom or Frye. The fragmentation characterizing the Fall is referred to as a series of "schizoid internal divisions [such] as the wars between male and female principles and between mind and nature" (9). Moreover, as the central conflict accounting for the Fall, the mind/nature struggle is discussed in language usually reserved for disturbing, unconscious, sexual fantasies. The independent natural world is personified by Vala as a dominatrix with female genitalia perceived as a "horror and threat" (49). She is a direct transcription of the toothed vagina (*vagina dentata*), a portrayal of "violent nature" doubling as a "phallic female whose secret delight is the castration of man" (102, 183). Yet in spite of these insights into the violent fantasy life of the poem, Wilkie and Johnson also repress its psychoanalytic dimension. An example of this can be found in their analysis of the words "drawn out" as they occur in the following passage describing Enion's creation of Tharmas' Spectre:

> His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire
> In *gnawing pain* drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve
> She counted, every vein & lacteal threading them among
> Her woof of terror.
>
> (5:15-18; emphasis added)

For Wilkie and Johnson, Enion's unravelling/weaving of Tharmas' Spectre can be read as a "drawing-off of the essential evil in a character [which] will serve a constructive purpose of defining and clarifying" (27). Error is consolidated and identified through the creation of "splinter-personalities" like Rahab or Satan who constitute the worst aspects of Vala and Urizen in the fallen condition (181). Moreover, this drawing-off, splintering and polarization is all subsumed as part of the poem's progress towards apocalyptic reunification. It becomes a detail in the poem's narrative of consciously transparent psychological faculties as they re-enact the myth of Fall and Redemption. Yet this analysis ignores the "gnawing pain" of Tharmas and the suggestion that he is being 'gnawed' or eaten by Enion, who affectionately flays him on her "woof of terror" fibre by bloody fibre. Enion is doing much more than merely teasing the worst aspect out of Tharmas! In order to understand what else might be going on in this violence we need seriously to pursue the neglected insight that the poem contains sexual fantasies of a phallic female.

Like Bloom and Frye, Wilkie and Johnson also find that the poem achieves an apocalyptic closure by Night IX through the regeneration of a separate and fallen natural world. The "multiple personalities" of Zoas, Emanations and Spectres

> which were necessary in Blake's earlier anatomy of error, collapse and organicize into unified characters now purged of error, who in turn collapse and organicize into a reunified humanity.
>
> (212)

As a crucial dimension of this reunification the "pastoral interlude" of Vala's Garden Scene reflects "a substantive development in man's psychic education and growth." More to the point, it provides us with a "redeemed view of physical nature, which of course Vala herself personifies." At the same time, Wilkie and

Johnson alert us to the fact that this regeneration of female nature is predicated upon her subordination to Luvah: "In Vala's recognition of Luvah as her Lord, Blake may also have had in mind Eve's submissive[ness]" (225-226). They are thus more forthright than either Bloom or Frye about the gender-coded "symbolic hierarchy" used by Blake to articulate his visionary goal of Edenic, imaginative renewal (219). Yet they do not pursue this insight in order to uncover Blake's participation in a phallocentric tradition, nor do they examine the psychoanalytic dynamics which ground and permeate it as a symbolic order in which paternal, masculine elements repress and marginalize the maternal.

The following section problematizes the reading of *The Four Zoas* given by the above critics who represent the major trend in the critical reception of the poem. For all of them, in spite of their awareness that the poem contains imagery associated with violent sexual fantasies, *The Four Zoas* remains a psychological poem inaccessible to psychoanalytic treatment. Leopold Damrosch remains similar to these critics in that he briefly alludes to the fragmentation of the Zoas in language borrowed from psychoanalysis and shares their opinion that this divisiveness is healed in an apocalyptic finale. Borrowing the term "schizoid" from R. D. Laing, Damrosch argues that Blake is "obsessed, by dividedness within the self" which can only be cured through an "inner apocalypse," transforming the mind into a "dynamic vitality" or "ever-shifting system of relationships" (122, 131, 123, 128). Yet Damrosch is also the most explicit about the poem's psychological, as opposed to psychoanalytic, nature. For him, there are certain ways in which what Blake is doing in *The Four Zoas* clearly differs from what Freud proposes as psychoanalysis. Freud, Damrosch observes, does not "equate the mind with consciousness." That part of the mind known as the unconscious "is inaccessible to direct introspection and can only be detected as it is betrayed by neurotic symptoms, dreams, significant 'slips,' and so on." What Blake describes in his

myth of the Zoas therefore cannot be an account of unconscious processes since they are accessible to his introspective gaze as observable mental faculties. Damrosch concludes that Blake only records what Freud would call the preconscious, which is consistent with what he sees as Blake's refusal "to postulate a gulf between ego and id, either of hostile opposition or of beneficient but hidden connections" (156). Hence, for Blake, "there is no unknowable unconscious" and the myth he constructs of personified and antagonistic faculties "is more like the psychomachia of traditional allegory than like psychoanalytic explanation" (158-59).

One could respond to Damrosch by citing the advances made by Lacanian and Kristevan psychoanalysis to the effect that language is always already marked by the conflict between the unconscious (semiotic) and the symbolic. Given this view, it would be impossible for any poem, including *The Four Zoas*, to cordon itself off psychically in the way suggested by Damrosch. To illustrate this point in a preliminary way, one can argue that *The Four Zoas* already betrays its own unconscious through neurotic symptoms, dreams and significant slips. It does exactly what Damrosch suggests that it should do. For example, Blake's use of "gnawing" to describe the pain of Tharmas at having his Spectre drawn out constitutes a significant slip. Like a typical neurotic symptom, slips express "drive and defense simultaneously" so that an outlet is found for an unconscious impulse which can only surface in a disguised and distorted way, since defenses against it are still partially in place (Fenichel 193). In the episode of Tharmas' Spectre, the imagery is predominantly that of weaving and participates in what can be identified as a weaving motif occurring throughout the poem. Since this motif does not immediately foreground oral incorporation and dismemberment, one simply passes over the reference to "gnawing pain" until an awareness of the connotations of "gnaw" transforms the entire episode into a violent sexual fantasy.

In retrospect, the innocuous appearance of the weaving imagery takes on the character of a defense which initially conceals and distorts the significance of the episode as sexual fantasy, even though this unconscious material partially surfaces in the word "gnaw."

Another way of responding to Damrosch is to take Blake seriously when he claims that *The Four Zoas* is, in fact, a dream. Although this characterization of the poem owes much to Blake's work on Young's *Night Thoughts*, there is more to it than a simple case of one poet borrowing another's form. Some critics have gone so far as to draw close comparisons between this poem and actual dream experience. Wilkie and Johnson state that "the poem has some affinity with dream narrative" (2). Frye is more specific in his comparisons of the poem with dream sequences and implicitly suggests this as a reason for choosing *The Four Zoas*, instead of *Jerusalem*, for psychoanalytic treatment. In the former's "lack of explanations, its passionate utterance and its rich suggestive imagery, it forms a complete contrast to *Jerusalem*, and surrounds us with the atmosphere of a dream world as *Jerusalem* very seldom does" (270). Like neurotic symptoms and slips, dreams are compromise formations in which unconscious material slips past the censor when the repressive mechanisms of consciousness are relaxed during sleep. Although unconscious material is allowed to surface, enough resistance due to repression is retained, causing this material to appear in a distorted, unrecognizable and hallucinatory form.

To a certan extent, we have already seen how the written text of *The Four Zoas* behaves like a dream narrative in the episode of Tharmas' Spectre. Yet as Brenda Webster has observed, the core of this poem not only "revolves around fantasies of a seductive but murderous phallic female . . . embodied in the text" but also graphically depicts these fantasies "in a series of remarkable and highly sexual illustrations" (*Psychology* 203). In her approach to interpreting these

illustrations, Webster borrows from the theoretical assumptions of art therapy. Blake's illustrations are seen as expressions of "a fearful fantasy directly and without adding supportive intellectual meaning" (*Psychology* 204). Webster's assumption here is that the poem's written, mythological and conceptualized material exerts a repressive pressure on the unconscious which is less severe in the case of visual expression. This is very close to what Margaret Naumburg, one of the pioneers in art therapy, says in her book on *Psychoneurotic Art*:

> In this therapy the image frequently escapes the denial of the censor in a way that words cannot. This happens because a patient may recognize and successfully repress verbal meaning before it is exteriorized. But when a forbidden impulse escapes from the unconscious into visual symbols, such a repressed emotion slips into pictorial projection before the censor is able to intervene.
>
> (6)

Not only does visual expression offer us more immediate access to unconscious material but, in doing so, it reproduces the greater ability of dreams to tap into this realm:

> The image-making power of the unconscious relates to man's basic and primitive way of experiencing. His dreams and fantasies are originally released as pictures; translation of such images into graphic designs therefore becomes a more direct mode of expression than words. Deeper and more primitive than our intellectualized verbal communication is the demand of the unconscious which still speaks in images, and asks to be heard.
>
> (4)

In drawing this comparison between Blake's illustrations to *The Four Zoas* and psychoneurotic art, I wish merely to foreground the striking way in which the

poem duplicates a dream's ability to communicate the sexual fantasies of the unconscious. While these fantasies may exist in a disguised and distorted form in the written text, the less disguised and distorted nature of the illustrations can provide us with a clue towards interpreting Blake's language. Critics like Damrosch may wish to deny the presence of the unconscious in *The Four Zoas*. Yet once one acknowledges the direct and unmediated nature of Blake's illustrations, there can be little doubt that their sexual charge also contaminates the written text.

A brief consideration of the psychoneurotic nature of Blake's illustrations to *The Four Zoas* will prove useful in helping us appreciate the way in which this poem cries out for psychoanalytic interpretation. The following discussion summarizes some of Webster's findings in her book on *Blake's Prophetic Psychology*. In making her observations, Webster incorporates and expands upon the analysis provided by John E. Grant in his article on "Visions in Vala: a Consideration of Some Pictures in the Manuscript." Grant is guided by the view that a "would-be visionary," like Blake, must be a "sexologist" in order to be a "seer" (144). Hence *The Four Zoas* contains "the most excessively erotic sequence of pictures in Blake," including illustrations of a "primal scene," the "family romance," "vegetated phalluses," "fellatio," "a hoselike Phallus" and "coitus from the rear" (144, 169, 170, 185, 189, 190). Yet Grant does not pursue a psychoanalytic reading of this material. At best he can only conclude that Blake

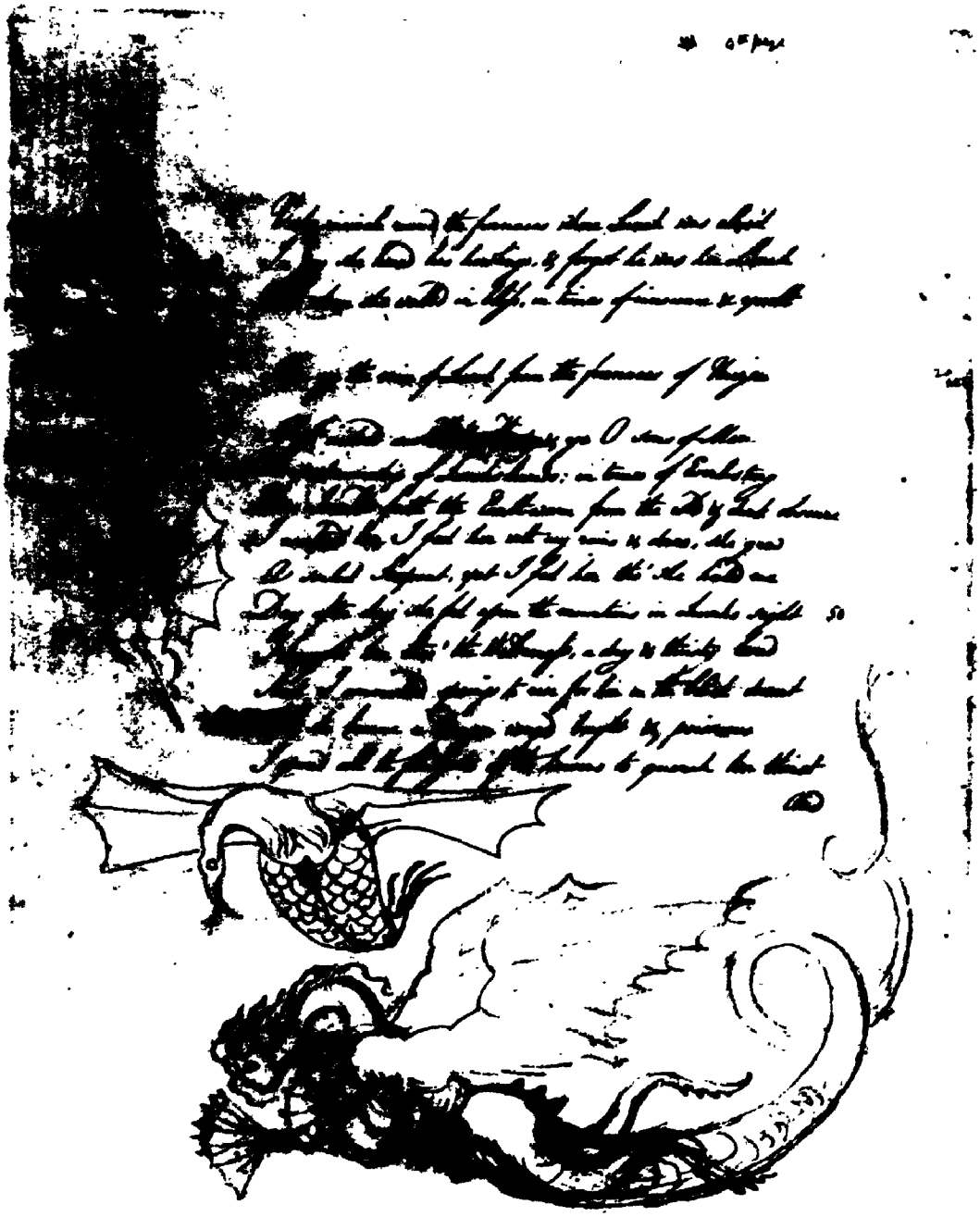
> seems to have observed more clearly than most libertarians in the eighteenth century how the pursuit of natural happiness tends to lead insensibly toward a quest for the unnatural.
>
> (194)

More recently, David Erdman and Cettina Magno have produced a photographic facsimile of *The Four Zoas* and have added a commentary on the

illuminations which seeks to redress the problem that "[f]ew scholars have discussed these designs with any thoroughness" (17). Their commentary is not influenced by psychoanalysis which is perhaps due to the fact that Webster's book, among others, was "[r]eceived too late for notice in [it]" (20). They even go so far as to caution against a specifically Freudian approach. In the case of page 26 of the manuscript (Fig. 7), depicting a bat-winged female-turned-dragon, they claim that it "would be misleading . . . to compare this vision to Freud's concept of the unconscious production of the fearful sight of a toothed and castrating vagina, for Blake's vision is not castrating" (39). From a psychoanalytic perspective, however, one could argue that their warning against such a 'misinterpretation' reveals that, at some level, a psychoanalytic reading must have suggested itself to them as a likely possibility. The defensiveness of their warning is also betrayed by the fact that they even attempt a reading of these illustrations, several lines later, which leaves open the possibility that this dragon-woman with a "phallic serpent tail [attempts] . . . to capture the male organ" (39). Capturing the phallus may just be another way of appropriating it through castration. Webster's treatment of Blake thus represents an advance on these other attempts since she does not ignore the psychoanalytic implications of his pictures.

As far as Webster is concerned, Blake's illustrations include depictions of a phallic woman "with clearly defined breasts and an erect penis" who is sometimes represented as a "three-headed woman-serpent" or "a female monster with a serpentine tail" (204, 208, 248). The phallic woman's incarnation as woman-serpent receives what is perhaps her best or most graphic visual representation with the series of illustrations on page 26 of the manuscript (Fig. 7). These include a "flying woman with butterfly wings" whose vagina-shaped body "suggests a voracious sexual organ" (i.e., *vagina dentata*). We also find a bat-winged woman riding "a penis and scrotum . . . a woman with a

Figure No. 7. Page 26 from *The Four Zoas.* Taken from '*The Four Zoas by William Blake: A Photographic Facsimile of the Manuscript with Commentary on the Illuminations*, Cranbury: Bucknell UP, 1987. p. 140.



phallically dangerous beak, scaley tail, and clearly defined vulva . . . [and] a huge dragon with a woman's head, a serpent's neck, and bat wings" (213). Yet not all of the depictions of a phallic female dwell on her configuration as a woman-serpent. There is also one illustration of nude or semi-dressed women who "pluck vegetated phalluses and put them in a basket" (215). While it is often assumed that the phallic female is also a maternal figure, these illustrations remain unclear on this point. Nevertheless, Blake includes one representation of "a large woman spanning or manipulating the young Luvah's penis" and another in which Los and Enitharmon are portrayed as "destructively greedy" infants who are "avidly sucking at Enion's breasts" (222, 207). These scenes of suggestively incestuous and pre-oedipal sexuality between mother and child can be linked to illustrations of phallic women in order to clarify their maternal status. Exactly how we are to understand the terror of dismemberment associated with the phallic mother remains to be seen.

Blake's illustrations also fall into other groupings, including that of Oedipal conflict. In Night V there are several which fall into this category. One depicts Orc as "a naked youth who kisses and embraces Enitharmon, entwining his legs with hers while Los kneels, bound by jealousy, and regards them desperately" (229-230). Yet such incest is punished in other illustrations in which Orc "is splayed out on the ground" or "malevolently spanned by his paternal rival's hand" (231). Other illustrations can be read as depictions of a primal scene, while some are simply pictures of unrestrained sexual excess. In this last category one finds an illustration of a naked woman who "bends backward with a lascivious expression . . . [while] being penetrated anally by a huge unattached phallus" (220). Consequently, Blake's illustrations depict a number of sexual fantasies including those of the phallic mother, preoedipal incestuous and anaclitic relations, Oedipal rivalry and anal (sadistic) sexuality, while also suggesting that this unconscious

material can be found in the written text. *The Four Zoas* is not just a psychological poem but also promises to be a rich source of psychoanalytic deposits. Yet while psychoanalysis helps us to identify these fantasies, we need to be clear on the type of psychoanalytic criticism we are using to explore their presence in the text.

Genotext versus Phenotext

In characterizing the poem as a dream, I do not intend to argue for it as the manifest content of Blake's latent and repressed unconscious. Rather, if there is an unconscious percolating through the text it is the unconscious of an overdetermined cultural text and not of Blake's personal sexual fantasies. The gender-coded binaries and metaphors which organize our historical and cultural discourses are themselves organized through the mechanisms of repression and marginalization which orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis both explains and codifies. Moreover, these phallocentric hierarchies articulate themselves in a variety of cultural productions in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Yet in spite of this cultural dominance of masculine/paternal metaphors over and above female/maternal ones, the latter frequently erupt in ways which subvert the stability of such a symbolic order.

It is Kristeva who helps us understand these subversions as a signifying process in which a repressed semiotic text disfigures the placidity of fixed patriarchal structures. Kristeva also refers to such a subversive text as a genotext. As "process" the genotext "moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders" (*Revolution* 87). It "organizes a space in which the subject is not *yet*" positioned but is on the way to being "*generated* as such" (*Revolution* 86). Made up in part of semiotic drive motility, the genotext moves in the direction of establishing the subject within the borders of the symbolic while stopping short of

freezing itself into this subject position. The phenotext, on the other hand, is a purely symbolic structure distinguished by the predominance of syntactically correct communication between well defined subjects. Through these "ultimately sociopolitical" constraints, the phenotext "knot[s] . . . and lock[s] [language] into a given surface or structure" (88). While the phenotext constitutes this latter kind of symbolic fixity, the genotext repeatedly erupts to dissolve these borders while simultaneously moving on in the direction of recreating them in a new guise. Hence, together with the phenotext, it creates the subject in process/on trial, dissolving one position only to recreate it and set it up for future dissolutions. Thus, by characterizing *The Four Zoas* as a dream, I use Freud's analysis of the dream as a compromise formation to serve as a descriptive point of access to Blake's poem, turning it into a site of conflict between a fluid, disruptive genotext and phenotextual rigidity.

While the dream, for Freud, is a compromise formation between unconscious material and censor, this conflict can be reinterpreted with Kristeva's help as a conflict between a culturally repressed maternal position and the dominant patriarchal discourse. Likewise, the sexual fantasies of a dream narrative can be read as articulations of both kinds of conflict: the unconscious versus the superego or the genotext versus the phenotext. In the case of *The Four Zoas*, the phenotext is also constituted by a critical tradition that has stabilized the poem's meaning around fixed patterns and identities. In spite of their difficulty and resistance to conceptual paraphrase, the patterns of Fall and Redemption, division and reunification, the identities of the Zoas (as psychological faculties), Emanations and Spectres, and the conflict between imagination and nature have all been decoded in terms which can be fixed by the formulas of a Blake dictionary. Yet the example from Night I, in which Enion unravels Tharmas in order to reweave his Spectre, also yields an excess of affect in relation

to the semantic content of the imagery, suggesting that there is more going on in this scene than one can reach through a traditionally formalist criticism. The sadistic cannibalism implied by the scene's diction and imagery calls for an interpretive approach which can make sense of such oral incorporation and dismemberment. In other words, the scene's semantic excess constitutes the surfacing of a genotext which releases the episode from its fixed status in Blake criticism and opens the poem up to a new reading. Moreover, this semantic excess coalesces in the form of several motifs, occurring throughout the poem, which psychoanalysis helps us understand as a series of sexual fantasies. Since these dream-like fantasies are the by-product of conflict between phenotext and genotext, they also articulate this conflict in a variety of ways, turning the poem into a contest between the gender-coded positions defining our culture.

Motifs

Donald Ault has recently uncovered the presence of recurrent narrative elements within *The Four Zoas* and has identified these as a series of patterns or motifs. Within the context of his own investigation, these motifs become a way of connecting events from different nights of the poem so that earlier episodes can be revised by later ones as part of Blake's undermining of Newtonian narrative. The next section will discuss Ault's methodology in more detail. While borrowing the notion of motif from Ault, this investigation employs it in a psychoanalytic context which differs from his own 'atheoretical' approach. Ault deals with Blake's text by foregrounding narrative interconnections between details without seeking to interpret them within recognizable theoretical contexts. Ault's approach can be characterized as neutral even though its overall intent seems to be informed by poststructural linguistic theory. This study, however, treats each motif psychoanalytically as it occurs within both *The Four Zoas* and other

Blakean works intertextually related to it. Ultimately patterns are created in Blake's texts through the eruption of sexual fantasies announcing themselves as these motifs.

The patterns studied in this section as cathected sites of sexual fantasies include the chain motif, rivalry motif, feast motif and weaving (unravelling) motif. These motifs appear in the poem in isolation from each other or in a variety of combinations. In the case of Enion and Tharmas from Night I, the weaving and feast motifs overlap. Although Brenda Webster's analysis falls within orthodox Freudian limits, her discussion of Blake is particularly useful in identifying the persistence of these motifs and fantasies in his corpus. For example, Webster introduces the feast motif as it overlaps with the rivalry motif in *Tiriel*. Specifically it is the semantic excess of affect contained in the poem's oral imagery which provides her with an opening for psychoanalytic interpretation. Hence

> the father-son conflict is expressed through a rich variety of oral imagery, particularly that of devouring . . . It runs from the opening scene where Tiriel curses his sons for draining their mother . . . to the end, where he remembers his own deprived and hungry infancy.
>
> (*Psychology* 31)

Aside from *Tiriel*, Blake employs oral imagery extensively in *The Four Zoas*, where it appears in the Nuptial Feast and Song of Los and Enitharmon in Night I, in Vala's consuming of Luvah while he burns in Urizen's furnaces in Night II, in Orc's eating the bread made by Urizen's daughters in Night VII, and in Los and Enitharmon's eating the fruit of the Tree of Mystery in Night VIII and the Harvest/Vintage feast of Night IX. As this section progresses, I shall examine some of these episodes as in some way related by figural representations of the incestuous, anaclitic relationship between mother and child in which food is charged as the source of sexual gratification. The sadism and cannibalistic

overtones often associated with this oral imagery further emphasize the pregenital and preoedipal nature of these configurations, locating them as oral sadistic manifestations. While some of the scenes mentioned above are arguably about the child's consumption of the mother, others are about the lack of such food, and still others depict a form of castration intent on dismembering and eating the polymorphously perverse child. Although the oral imagery in *The Four Zoas* sometimes alternates between unequivocal episodes of incestuous gratification and castration, there are episodes when a certain image complex intertextually weaves these conflicting strands into what are examples of the semiotic at work in the text.

While the feast motif is perhaps the most dominant fantasy in the poem, it is the rivalry motif of Night V which provides us with the clearest and most unambiguous representation of Blake's psycho-sexual text. It offers us relatively clear representations of incestuous desire, father-son conflict and the superego's eventual, though sometimes tenuous, victory. Together with the presence of the chain motif, this fantasy provides a psychoanalytic reading with the easiest way into the poem. From Night V further intertextual connections can be made to Nights IV and II as alternate and simultaneous perspectives on the nature of the Law's triumph. In these nights Blake represents the Law in relatively straightforward images of enslavement, bondage and hierarchy. Yet these representations of the castration complex can also be figured forth in images of child dismemberment which simultaneously overlap with expressions of anaclisis and the child's fragmentation into erotogenic zones. In a word, both incest and the Law are described in similarly horrific imagery and hold out nothing for Blake but the possibility of fragmentation and dismemberment. In this sense it is the existential condition of human sexuality which constitutes the Fall and which receives its most succinct treatment with the mutual dismemberment of Tharmas

and Enion at the beginning of Night I. Redemption for Blake becomes the complete elimination of this condition through the creation of an exclusively masculine Human Form Divine, eliminating the mother as a problematic source of incestuous gratification *and* paternal agency. Part of the attempt to marginalize and exile the female includes the creation of a binary system of oppression in Night IX, of which Vala's Garden Scene becomes the center. As with Blake's aesthetic theory, he contests what he considers to be an oppressive tendency only to reintroduce it on another level. Yet this effort collapses into relations of undecidability. Even though the redemption becomes another form of Urizenic repression, its subversion in Vala's Garden Scene demonstrates the resilience of the semiotic's destabilizing influence.

In Medias Res

By entering the poem in Night V, I consequently approach it *in medias res* and then work backwards. This methodology is also suggested by the work of Donald Ault in *Narrative Unbound.* Ault is the first critic who has spent any length of time attempting to unravel the extremely dense and complex textual web that structurally characterizes *The Four Zoas* as a poem. For Ault, these cross-references occur as part of a Blakean strategy designed to upset reader expectations of a linear narrative, such as the overall plot structure of the Fall and its subsequent Redemption. As far as Ault is concerned, the organization of a narrative's disparate elements by a centralizing plan constitutes a kind of Urizenic tyranny which seeks to bind, control, regulate and repress. It is, in short, a form of "imaginative death" (4). Ault argues that rather than bring this about in the reader, Blake, in *The Four Zoas*, sets out to undermine the reader's expectation

> that behind the complex world of . . . the text lies a single unified field (*ur*-narrative, privileged originating event, state of consciousness, and so

on) whose essential features do not irreconcilably and incommensurably conflict with one another but can (in theory at least) be fully captured through systematic analytic explanation.

(3)

Consequently Blake has written a text in which narrative events from all of the nights are cross-referenced, interconnected and interconstituted in such a way that past events, for example, are rearranged, retold and distorted by characters in subsequent episodes so that a kind of retroactive transformation and revision occurs. This produces "a narrative field in which the past is not finished and closed but incomplete and open--alterable and revisable" (4). Hence it becomes impossible to define a pre-existent world or condition from which characters in the poem fall, since this world, and the Fall itself, are described in several mutually conflicting ways and there is no standard, internal to the work, by which to differentiate between them, privileging some over others.

My own reading of Blake's retroactive revision of earlier nights understands the poem as a *juxtaposition* of sexual fantasies: those of incestuous and sadistic preoedipal sexuality against the sadistic prohibitions of the superego. Ordinarily these phases of psychic development are placed in a temporal chronology in which the relationship between a preoedipal semiotic and repressive symbolic is a *successive* one. This is in fact how I read the poem; as an analogue of psychic development, beginning with Night I as a configuration of semiotic conflict between drive and stasis. Yet this characterization of Night I only becomes clear once one first identifies motifs and fantasies within other nights organized as representations of thetic phase development and the symbolic order. This is due largely to the fact that the psycho-sexual concerns of the poem are most transparent in Night V. Once we gain access to the poem through Night V, as a fantasy enactment of the Oedipus complex, its intertextual links with the motifs in

Night IV and Night II transform them into representations of the mirror stage and the social consequences of the symbolic. In spite of the appearance of getting everything backwards, this approach legitimizes itself once it establishes the chronology of nights as an analogue of psychic development. While psychic development does move in the direction of a temporal chronology for Kristeva, it also exists as a spatial topology in which successive phases are simultaneous. The anal-sadistic drive motility of a preoedipal chora is regulated by the postoedipal symbolic as mediated by the mother's body. Likewise the preoedipal semiotic erupts and transfigures postoedipal symbolic arrangements as part of a signifying process. In both cases Kristeva approaches the successive nature of semiotic/symbolic relationships as spatial topologies, juxtaposed and in conflict with each other. Hence the chronology of nights can also be read as a linear version of what is, from another perspective, a stratified psychic text made up of conflicting regions. When considered in this way the poem becomes accessible at any point, with no psychic region or night taking temporal priority over another. My methodology thus moves in a somewhat circular fashion, establishing grounds for what it does only on the basis of first doing it.

The Hermaphrodite and Vala

This brings us to Night IX and Vala's Garden Scene as the place where the horrific conflicts uncovered in Night I are purportedly quieted and sublimated into the Human Form Divine. From our brief survey of major critical responses to the poem, it would seem that Vala's Garden Scene has become standardized as the regeneration of a fallen, hostile nature. It is assumed that such a process of harmonization between Luvah and Vala as well as Tharmas and Enion will lead to the resurrection of Albion as a dramatic interchange of coequal Zoas. Yet Vala's presence in this garden, notwithstanding her surface appearance as domesticated

shepherdess, is overdetermined by her 'identity' as hermaphrodite. As a kind of mini-motif appearing in Night VIII of the poem, the hermaphrodite also doubles as another fantasy of the phallic mother. While earlier representations of this fantasy include conflicting interpretations of cannibalistic imagery, the conflicts peculiar to the hermaphrodite are best understood in the context of gender-coded binary oppositions. When regeneration places the Zoas in a democratic "Brotherhood" where "Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face," it also creates a society in which the female is quite rigorously, though implicitly, marginalized (133: 22, 25). Yet the hermaphroditic genotext overdetermining Vala's identity disrupts these efforts at hierarchization just as the semiotic pulverizes the symbolic in order to make it into a new signifying device. Rather than remain a compliant agent of apocalyptic regeneration Vala enters into a complex struggle between herself and efforts made to subordinate her to Luvah. Moreover, the eruption of this genotext turns the hierarchical arrangements of Vala's garden into a *gynema* or zone of undecidability--creating a conflictual signifying process out of what might otherwise be read as a static, bipolar, symbolic condition.

That the hermaphrodite functions as such a disruptive force can be seen from some of the studies done on the history of this figure as a sexual outlaw. In *The History of Sexuality* (vol. I) Michel Foucault observes that

> For a long time hermaphrodites were criminals, or crime's offspring, since their anatomical disposition, their very being, confounded the law that distinguished the sexes and prescribed their union.
>
> (38)

Foucault's brief allusion to a "law" regulating sexual identity and marriage implicitly indicts the hermaprodite as a creature whose very existence threatens the symbolic order and the gender-coded binaries it creates and sustains through repression. Other critics are more explicit when discussing the threat posed by

he/she/it to the phallocentric discourses shaping life in the Renaissance. In her introduction to *Playing with Gender*, Maryanne C. Horowitz relates how

> Hermaphrodites challenge not only gender construction but also the classification by sex fundamental to the patriarchal functioning of the Renaissance family, church, and state.
>
> (xi)

In an article from a collection entitled *The Politics of Gender*, Allison P. Coudert argues that concern over sexual anomalies became pronounced after the upheavals of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation ushered in a reactionary desire for order and orthodoxy. With the "breakdown of social, political, and religious consensus" also came "the collapse of traditional intellectual and scientific systems." As part of the redefinition of power and class relationships, dichotomies "such as active versus passive, dominant versus subordinate, reason versus sense . . . had to be reformulated for an increasingly centralized, commercialized urban society." Ultimately "these categories were themselves subsumed under the broader antithesis between masculine and feminine [making] the issue of what it was to be male and female [of] fundamental importance" ("Myth" 65). In other words, Coudert outlines the historical entrenchment of a phallocentric order after a disruptive period in which the gender-coded hierarchies of a patriarchal system are initially disturbed. Given this historical overview, one sees how the hermaphrodite, as a paradigm for what does not fit into the prescribed sexual blueprint, functions as a reminder and symbol of disorder:

> Fascination with monsters, amazons, *hermaphrodites*, prodigies, apparitions, comets, and witches, in short with everything "unnatural," was indicative of the profound anxiety awakened by the destruction of existing categories. New categories without ambiguity had to be imposed or created.
>
> ("Myth" 65; emphasis added)

Foucault's introduction to the memoirs of Herculine Barbin can provide us with further insight into Blake's use of the hermaphrodite as a disruptive character in *The Four Zoas*. Although the memoirs compiled by Barbin were written between 1860 and 1870, their use by the German psychiatrist, Oscar Panizza, in a work of fiction, provides us with an index of how a medical and juridical designation of intersexuality can find a place for itself in the imagination of a writer. Blake and Panizza may be separated by a century, but the similarity between Blake's description of his hermaphrodite, and Foucault's description of Panizza's creative transposition of this condition, hints at the possibility that both use this configuration as a way of representing the same conceptual and metaphysical indeterminacy.

Panizza writes a text in which the hermaphrodite, Herculine Barbin, triumphs in her (his/its) ability to evade and undermine the symbolic insistence on clear and distinct gender identities. Her guerilla-like elusiveness is in part communicated through the proliferation of interchangeable names by which she is 'identified,' as if every attempt to fix her in place proves inadequate and requires yet another foredoomed attempt. Hence she (he/it) is Adélaide Herculine Barbin, Alexina Barbin, Abel Barbin, or simply Camille. Panizza takes this indeterminacy and mobilizes it as the 'organizing' metaphor of his text:

> Panizza deliberately leaves in the center of his narrative a vast area of *shadow*, and that is precisely where he places Alexina. Sister, mistress, disturbing schoolgirl, strayed cherub, male and female lover, faun running in the forest, incubus stealing into the warm dormitories, hairy-legged satyr, exorcized demon–Panizza presents her only in the fleeting profiles which others see. This boy-girl, this never eternal masculine-feminine, is nothing more than what passes at night in the dreams, the desires, and the fears of everyone. Panizza chose to make her only a *shadowy figure*,

> without an identity and *without a name*, who vanishes at the end of the narrative leaving no trace.
>
> (xvi; emphasis added)

At the place where Pa.. .. should put a structural 'hub' or stable grounding presence he situates a suggestion of a figure who is just out of reach and whose passage through a variety of masks is communicated to us through a series of second-hand reports. Now you see her (he/it), now you don't! Alexina's sexual indeterminacy always stays one step ahead of the clutches of symbolic clarity, leaving a trail of shadowy profiles which continue to entice and lure one after 'her' with suggestions that there should be something there, something fixed and definite. In the end, however, she disappears completely, frustrating all efforts to identify her (his/its) true sex within a syste" ' of gender-coded binaries.

Panizza's characterization of the hermaphrodite as a problem for administrative control within the symbolic order, and as a metaphor of subversion, can aid our understanding of the implications inherent in Blake's use of this figure. In short, Blake's use of the hermaphrodite in *The Four Zoas* functions much like "Mother outline" as Fury and Siren insofar as she becomes another maternal figure capable of scrambling gender-coded binary oppositions. Like the painterly style of Rubens, she may be initially identified as a form of tyranny only to become a subversive potential, undermining the implicit oppression of Blake's regenerated brotherhood.

We are introduced to the hermaphrodite as a subversive maternal figure in Night VIII of *The Four Zoas* :

> The war roard round Jerusalems Gates it took a hideous form
> Seen in the aggregate a Vast Hermaphroditic form
> Heard like an Earthquake labring with convulsive groans
> Intolerable at length an awful wonder burst

> From the Hermaphroditic bosom Satan he was namd
> Son of Perdition terrible his form dishumanizd monstrous
> A male without a female counterpart a howling fiend
> Fo[r]lorn of Eden & repugnant to the forms of life
> Yet hiding the shadowy female Vala as in an ark & Curtains
> Abhord accursed ever dying an Eternal death . . . .
>
> (104: 19-28)

The "Vast Hermaphroditic form" alluded to in this passage is initially figured forth as "an Earthquake labring with convulsive groans" and displays the characteristics of a mother in the process of giving birth. This fissure opened up by her birth pangs, together with her convulsive inarticulateness, also identify her with the subversive features of 'outlaw' women discovered by Anca Vlasopolos in Romantic texts resisting closure in one form or another.[1]

In her article "'Deep Romantic Chasm': Women as Textual Disturbances in Romantic Poetry," Vlasopolos discusses the prevalence of lawless women in Romantic poetry as a marginalized yet disruptive force, undermining a text's closure and refusing assimilation by a dominant patriarchal discourse through a stubborn inarticulateness. She uses the term "lawless" to designate women who appear in Romantic poetry as "living either on the margins of the social order or entirely outside patriarchy" (31-32). Moreover, Vlasopolos goes on to correlate the appearance of these lawless women in poetic texts with the

> unfinished, . . . fragmented, . . . open-ended [and] provisional forms of literature . . . [representing] a conscious inability and an often unconscious unwillingness on the Romantics' part to duplicate literary structures that collaborate with established power.
>
> (32)

Patriarchal power exhibits itself in the text as a poet's "mastery and dominion over the text and its dissemination." Having marginalized themselves from the dominant patriarchal discourse of their era, Romantic poets cultivate a "loss of control" as a resistance to this "collusion between literature and the social discourse of power." Hence they employ configurations of lawless women as a way of introducing a "turbulence in the text that leads to what is regarded as typical of Romantic poetry . . . namely, the strife between containment and explosion [and] the disillusioned subversion of closures and endings." Aside from these formal ruptures *of* the text, one also finds topographical ruptures *in* the text. Unfinished texts not only contain representations of 'lawless' women but also situate them in or near a geological imagery of "chasms, certain fissures, cracks, gaps [and] ruptures that allow glimpses of lawlessness" (34). The inarticulate nature of these fragmented, open-ended texts is matched by the utterances of these women. Consequently they are heard through a series of "non-linguistic form[s]--as wails, moans, unknown tongues, [and] sobs--cleav[ing] the structure and the discourse of Romantic poetry in a way that puts into question the larger issues of textual mastery" (35). It is through these ruptures and inarticulate utterances that lawless women "become indicies of textual subversion that result in truncated, indeterminate, self-defeating formal processes" (37).

Blake's "Vast Hermaphroditic form" is a female outlaw doubling as a specifically maternal space. More striking than the stipulation that she appear near a fissure, the hermaphrodite is herself such a chasm or breach through which lawlessness is introduced in the "dishumanized monstrous" shape of Satan. Another instance from *The Four Zoas* of such an earthquake-like birth, in which the mother is a topographical fissure, can be found in Night V with the birth of Orc. There we are told that

> The groans of Enitharmon shake the skies the labring Earth
> Till from her heart rending his way a terrible Child sprang forth
> In thunder smoke & sullen flames & howlings & fury & blood . . . .
>
> (58: 16-18)

As Ault has observed, this is an uncanny form of double birth in which Orc appears ambiguously from the heart of both Enitharmon and 'the labring Earth." His birth, like Satan's, is the by-product of the bloody, inarticulate carnage of another earthquake which also doubles as a broken heart. In keeping with the pattern observed by Vlasopolos, this maternal fissure is the site of "groans" and "howlings" just as Satan appears accompanied by inarticulate "convulsive groans." Moreover, these intertextual connections between Satan and Orc are made more explicit in Night IX where we learn that Luvah's fall passes through his incarnation as Orc and comes to rest in the form of Satan as one of the limits set by the Eternals. Hence "when Luvah in Orc became a Serpent he des[c]ended into/ That State called Satan" (107: 26-27).

These connections between Satan and Orc have implications for the type of lawlessness which the hermaphrodite comes to represent in *The Four Zoas*. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the incest between Enitharmon and Orc soon after the latter's birth in Night V. Because of the similarity in their respective births, the incestuous dynamic involving Orc can also be said to exist in Satan's relationship with the hermaphrodite as an intertextual undercurrent. By way of another passage from Night VII, one can argue that Satan's earthquake-like birth is implicated in a wider context of intertextual relations suggesting incest. In this earlier scene, Orc is sexually embraced by the hermaphrodite, appearing this time as a "*nameless shadowy* Vortex" (91: 2; emphasis added), a description recalling Foucault's account of Barbin as a character in Panizza's fiction. Orc's sexual arousal, while in this embrace, is described in terms familiar to us from our

introduction to Satan's maternal hermaphrodite. Thus he returns the embrace he receives from the shadowy Vortex "As when the *Earthquake* rouses from his den his *shoulders* huge" (91: 6; emphasis added). In other words, Orc's sexual embrace is implicitly related to Satan's birth through this earthquake imagery. These relationships are even more overdetermined by further descriptions of Orc's sexual arousal when we are told, in the same passage, that "The hairy *shoulders* rend the links free are the wrists of fire" (91: 17; emphasis added). These shoulders embrace the Vortex. Moreover, they are also the shoulders we read about in *America* when Orc incestuously rapes his "shadowy" sister in exactly the same way he embraces the shadowy Vortex: "The hairy *shoulders* rend the links, free are the wrists of fire" (1:1; 2:2; emphasis added). Because of the identity of these lines and their connection to Orc's embrace of the Vortex through the imagery of shoulders, the sibling incest of *America* is metonymically displaced onto Orc's intercourse with the Vortex. The implicitly incestuous nature of this embrace is, furthermore, displaced onto Satan's birth when one considers the relationship created between these two scenes by their joint participation in earthquake imagery. Moreover, these incestuous undercurrents are reinforced by Orc's own earthquake-like birth in Night V and subsequent incestuous desire for Enitharmon. Through the common denominator of earthquake imagery, both Satan and Orc are involved in relationships with the hermaphrodite, suggesting both sibling and mother-son incest as the hermaphrodite's characteristic lawlessness.

The incestuous lawlessness erupting through hermaphroditic fissures is represented through the "dishumanized monstrous" figure of Satan. This emphasis on Satan's monstrous, non-human appearance identifies him with other monsters who threaten the clear articulation of hierarchically arranged gender-coded binaries. As a by-product of hermaphroditic lawlessness, Satan's appearance undermines the phallocentric order represented by Blake through the symbolism of

a delineated and masculine human form. Moreover, the incest associated with Satan's birth can be read as a representation, in the text, of semiotic drives which are activated through incestuous contact with the mother. In previous chapters, the eruption of these drives within a hierarchically arranged system has been characterized as a specifically female space. Not only does it produce a signifying process but this conflictual activity has also been described as an opening into what Jardine refers to as a *gynema* or woman-in-effect. Consequently, the disruption of binary oppositions within this female space is represented in Blake's text through the figure of the hermaphrodite and its threat to the masculine order symbolized by the Human Form Divine.

The intersexuality of the hermaphrodite is itself a symbol of gender undecidability. Also the view that such undecidability is set in motion within a female space is in general agreement with traditional Blake criticism when it identifies the hermaphrodite as a female-dominated entity in spite of its bisexuality. Frye observes that the hermaphrodite "is male energy *controlled* by a hidden religious belief in an external and therefore ultimately female god" and in this capacity represents "a male imagination *imprisoned* within a female will" (*Symmetry* 301; emphasis added). Just as Renaissance thought classifies the hermaphrodite together with female witches, and just as Panizza 'identifies' Herculine Barbin as primarily female, so too does Blake confer femininity upon this creature. Like these other examples of potentially subversive females, Blake's hermaphrodite also threatens the ordered hierarchies of a patriarchal system represented by his own masculine metaphor of the androgyne. Finally, if the topographical chasms and inarticulateness associated with lawless women and Blake's hermaphrodite produce a resistance to closure, then one form taken by this resistance can be found in those places where the text refuses to sort itself out into the hierarchical binaries called for by the regeneration of the Zoas into their

masculine, humanized form. In *The Four Zoas* this resistence occurs where one would least expect it: in Vala's Garden Scene where received critical opinion situates the regeneration and subordination of a hostile, feminine natural world. In the one place where hierarchies are supposed to be recreated they are instead subverted and transformed into an oscillating zone of undecidability. Yet this is not the only way in which the text's incompleteness resists the kind of authorial mastery of formal processes associated by Vlasopolos with patriarchy.

The resistance to closure erupting through the hermaphrodite's maternal breach and inarticulateness surfaces through the displacement of gender-coded binaries in Vala's Garden Scene. This oscillation is also reminiscent of the uncanny logic of the *pharmakos*/abject as mediated through the figure of "Mother outline" and the deconstruction of Blake's binaries of water colour and oil. This linkage between the hermaphroditic logic of Vala's Garden Scene and the abject dynamics of "Mother outline" is underscored by Satan's appearance as a "dishumanized monstrous" wonder. The advancing decay and shapelessness of Satan's "dishumanized" body suggests a process in which it is changing from a delineated figure into one bereft of outline. It has become a disfigured, corpselike piece of transitional matter, a misshapen monster and parody of the Human Form Divine. Consequently one recoils in horror from Satan who is "Fo[r]lorn of Eden & repugnant to the forms of life." Abjected from Eden, Satan is an implicitly excremental configuration whose explosive birth doubles as a painful act of defecation. Finally, with respect to the scene of birth itself, Kristeva identifies it as one of the primary sites of abjection:

> When Céline locates the ultimate of abjection--and thus the supreme and sole interest of literature--in the birth-giving scene, he makes amply clear which fantasy is involved: something *horrible to see* at the impossible doors of the invisible--the mother's body. The scene of scenes is here not the

> so-called primal scene but the one of giving birth, incest turned inside out, flayed identity. Giving birth: the height of bloodshed and life, scorching moment of hesitation (between inside and outside, ego and other, life and death), horror and beauty, sexuality and the blunt negation of the sexual. (*Powers* 155)

Although born from the hermaphroditic bosom and given life, Satan is also "repugnant to the forms of life" and is thus, also, a form of death and decay. His liminal condition, situated ambiguously between clear-cut binary options, reproduces the uncanny logic of the birth-giving scene as bloody zone of undecidability. Both Satan and the birth which generates him are linked to the incestuous disruption of such closed, and ultimately gender-coded binaries. Yet while *The Four Zoas* contains a Satanic representation of the abject as a subversion of binary structures, the poem's physically "monstrous" appearance also reproduces the condition of abjection through its own decaying and misshapen formlessness.

The text of *The Four Zoas* was never engraved, which would have been Blake's way of finishing and stabilizing it. By giving it a hard and determinate outline, the engraving process would have conferred closure upon the poem in two ways: it would obviously have given the poem an unalterable form and it would have implicitly subsumed this form within a binary system governed by Blake's masculine Human Form Divine. Instead, by leaving it unengraved, Blake gives us a manuscript written in several different scripts and at various stages of completion. Based on the analysis of these scripts given by Erdman in his textual notes to the poem, one can conjecture that Blake began with the intention of engraving it and abandoned this design after his compulsive revisions made this impossible. In other words, the manuscript itself can be said to exhibit a process of decay.

With some pages, Blake begins on a clean sheet of paper by writing in a fine copperplate script and making revisions neatly over erasures or in the wide paragraph breaks. Even these revisions are written in an elegant engraver's hand. To these revisions Blake makes further additions which are squeezed between lines and spill over into the margins. These are written in Blake's plain hand, as are those aspects of the text inscribed on the blank spaces of the proof sheets made for Young's *Night Thoughts*. It is difficult to know how these various scripts and their accompanying illustrations are related to one another and to determine which has priority. One could speculate that a complete poem entitled *Vala* was initially produced in copperplate hand as a finished product. Yet for one reason or another, Blake opens the poem up to a process of extensive revision and transforms it into a work-in-progress, making no one script or revision authoritative (E816). Erdman speculates that the effort

> to keep each page in copperplate perfection was sustained through a decade or more of labor over the text and drawings, a *descent* to ordinary hand on any given page occurring only when that page became too cluttered with revisions to be saved as perfect.
>
> (E816-817; emphasis added)

Although there are some "unspoiled" copperplate pages, Erdman cites the example of the above changes and other "minor but effacing revisions" which "may mean that Blake was giving up." Even on those pages which remain relatively uncontaminated by a plain hand, Erdman still finds evidence of revision into a working manuscript surfacing through the accompanying drawings which "vary in finish throughout." Otherwise one would expect to find "fairly finished drawings" on clean copperplate pages (817). This textual evidence of Blake's inadvertent loss of authorial control over the poem closely resembles his failure in aesthetic experiments with watercolour and delineation, "Incessantly labouring and

incessantly spoiling" what he may have initially done well (E756). The blackened, excrementitious and abject appearance of these paintings, in which the outline has been obliterated, is reproduced by the compulsive nature of Blake's revisions, which makes it impossible to give the poem a finished, engraved form after ten years of perfectionist effort. In both cases Blake's attempts at repressing the abject paradoxically result in an assertive return of the repressed along with all of its subversive potential. As W.J.T. Mitchell has suggested in "Dangerous Blake," the "compulsive repetition" of Blake's method is itself a form of madness in which his preoccupation with delineation and copperplate perfection becomes a neurotic symptom, simultaneously repressing and expressing unconscious material (413). In short, the incomplete and spoiled appearance of *The Four Zoas* manuscript corresponds with hermaphroditic indeterminacy, providing us with further grounds for a psychoanalytic approach.

Returning to the above passage from Night VIII, the appearance of the maternal hermaphrodite and Satan can be intertextually related to other passages in order to demonstrate hermaphroditic indeterminacy and Vala's involvement with it. As the passage progresses, we learn that Satan is also a hermaphrodite containing the "shadowy female Vala" within its "dishumanizd monstrous" yet male form. For an introduction to the Satanic hermaphrodite we must go to a previous passage which, together with this one, describes it in terms of scrambled, indeterminate binaries. Although the above passage seems to narrate the initial appearance of Satan, an earlier passage has already introduced him:

> Terrified & astonished Urizen beheld the battle take a form
> Which he intended not a *Shadowy hermaphrodite* black & opake
> The Soldiers namd it Satan but *he* was yet unformd & vast
> Hermaphroditic it at length became *hiding the Male*
> Within as in a Tabernacle Abominable Deadly . . . .
>
> (101: 33-37; emphasis added)

Satan appears as "the battle," a description which implicitly connects him with conflict between two opposing tendencies. This conflictual status is in keeping with previous interpretations of the hermaphrodite as "a sterile state of unreconciled and warring opposites" (Damon 181). As a consequence Satan becomes a "Shadowy hermaphrodite." Satan's "black & opake" appearance also suggests excrement and the uncanny logic of the *pharmakos*/abject. In reaction to this indeterminacy and Urizen's inability to control it, the soldiers confer an identity upon the hermaphrodite and originally give it the name of Satan even though it continues to resist such identification by remaining "unformd & vast." Although this attempt to control the hermaphrodite seeks to freeze it within a masculine identity, Satan's hermaphroditic fluidity reasserts itself in the very next line, as 'he' becomes a female in appearance while "hiding the Male/Within." Not only is Satan both male and female but the relationship between these gender components oscillates in the course of this passage. When we are introduced to Satan he (she/it) is already a "Shadowy hermaphrodite" so that the soldiers' attempt to fix his masculine identity implicitly represses his feminine aspect, hiding it. Yet this relationship is reversed by the end of the passage. Moreover, the circular logic of the passage suggests that such an oscillation is an infinite process. While the passage opens by introducing us to Satan as a formed hermaphrodite it also subsequently describes how he (she/it) "at length became" one, begging the question with respect to Satan's moment of origin.[2]

The characterization of the hermaphrodite as an oscillating zone of gender undecidability is a feature of both passages which introduce Satan into *The Four Zoas*. This circularity is already suggested by the relationship between the passage on page 101 and the passage on page 104, insofar as both narrate Satan's origin and initial appearance in the text. Once again, a subsequent episode, in a sense, presupposes what it seeks to 'demonstrate.' Yet there are also other relationships

between these passages which provide an insight into the one on page 104 as an instance of hermaphroditic indeterminacy. As either "war," "Earthquake," or "battle" the hermaphrodite is presented in both passages as conflict and rupture, suggesting a textual resistance to closure through the subversion of binary oppositions (104:19,21; 101:33). Likewise, as "black & opake," "unformd & vast" or "dishumanizd [and] monstrous" the hermaphrodite executes this subversion as abject (101:34-35; 104:24). The subversion begins on page 104 when Satan springs from the hermaphroditic, maternal "bosom" (104:23). In this case the hermaphrodite is a female, hiding the male within. Once born, Satan is described as "hiding the *shadowy female Vala* as in an ark & Curtains" (104:27; emphasis added). Satan now becomes an hermaphrodite with a male exterior hiding the female within. Yet we already know that the "Vast Hermaphroditic form" which gives birth to Satan on page 104 is also identified *as* Satan on page 101 (104:20). When this information is incorporated into the episode on page 104, we have a process in which Satan begins as a female, containing the male, and then gives birth to himself as male, containing the female. Female and male displace each other as outside and inside.

The oscillation inherent in such a displacement is underscored by the relationship between Satan and Vala within the hermaphroditic configuration. Their identity is already suggested by Vala's characterization as "shadowy female" and Satan's as "Shadowy hermaphrodite" (104:27; 101:34). Moreover, towards the end of the passage on page 104, Vala is described as "multitudes of tyrant Men" or "congregated Assemblies of wicked men" (104:29-30). When subsequently incarnated as Mystery, Vala takes on a similar composite nature since "when viewd near she divides/ To multitude" (109: 16-17). Keeping Vala's description as a multitude or assembly in mind, it is interesting to note that the hermaphroditic form which gives birth to Satan is also "Seen in the aggregate" (104: 20).

Combining these various intertextual strands creates a context in which Vala and Satan not only identified within the same spectral dynamic but also articulate this process as a potentially infinite cycle of displacement between male and female elements--with Vala containing Satan only to have Satan, in turn, contain Vala. What was characterized earlier as the intersexuality of Satan, as an oscillation between male and female elements, can now be read as an hermaphroditic process including both Vala and Satan within the same entity.

Having earlier identified Satan as the most fallen aspect of Luvah, we can also observe that the Vala/Satan hermaphrodite is a perversion of what Blake considers as the proper relationship between an unfallen Luvah and his Emanation. Yet rather than remain an external attribute of her masculine Zoa, Vala refuses to subordinate herself and instead uses the hermaphrodite to unsettle the gender-coded hierarchy of Blake's Edenic regime. With Vala's Garden Scene of Night IX, an attempt is made at restoring gender relations to their proper, hierarchical arrangement. Although Satan has been transformed back into Luvah, Vala still resists her own subordination through the mobilization of hermaphroditic undercurrents which finally, and openly, erupt by the end of the scene. We shall return to these considerations at the end of the current chapter.

The Historical and Political Approach to *The Four Zoas*

The foregoing discussion began by surveying the main trend in critical response to *The Four Zoas* which views the poem as an epic of psychic reintegration. The critics discussed often suggest the possibility of a psychoanalytic reading but go on either to ignore or explicitly reject such a treatment of the poem. Nevertheless, I take issue with them since the poem does call for such an interpretation based on the affective excess associated with its imagery, diction and accompanying illustrations when viewed as dream fantasies.

Moreover, it is possible to identify certain recurring motifs which become a series of sexual fantasies when charged by this semantic excess. The feast motif is one of these which psychoanalysis helps us identify as an element in the fantasy about a phallic mother. Psychoanalysis also helps us recognize certain conflicts associated with this fantasy which are derived in part from the poem's characterization as a dream or compromise formation. Yet it is Kristeva's combination of psychoanalysis with cultural criticism that enables us to read this conflict as a subversion of phallocentric structures which Blake's Human Form Divine, as a brotherhood of Zoas, represents. A Kristevan approach to *The Four Zoas* is thus not only psychoanalytic but also inherently political, and as such it also addresses the second major trend of critical response to the poem. This trend, combining the psychological with the historical and political, can be viewed as a significant companion tradition to the somewhat more prominent and exclusively psychological one. The ensuing discussion will survey some of the more representative figures in this psycho-historical tradition with a view towards demonstrating their inadequacies in comparison with Kristeva. Finally the influence of Georges Bataille on Kristeva will be discussed in order to foreground her politicizing of psychoanalysis as a major feature distinguishing her from orthodox Freudian approaches.

In *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* David Erdman inaugurates a second major trend in the critical reception of *The Four Zoas*, incorporating its psychological allegory into an historical context. The poem continues to be read as a narrative of psychic integration yet the union of the Zoas is also politically interpreted as a revolutionary solidarity against tyranny. Hence Erdman concludes that the

> very structure of *The Four Zoas* calls at the end for a repentant Urizen accepted into the Brotherhood of Man, of Nations, and of man's psychic

> faculties harmonized . . . 'the Ancient Man' who must wake and reunite his Zoas or divided self is still the naked multitude of England who must become One Man to defeat tyranny.
>
> (350, 294)

Erdman, however, does not devote any space to developing the poem's psychological allegory and seems tacitly to accept the work of other critics in this area. He concentrates instead on the historical reading and manages to construct a series of complex correlations between the mythological events of the narrative and major occurrences in the war between England and France, as well as other domestic political circumstances transpiring in both countries during the time of the poem's composition. The most important of these specific historical allusions appear in the following nights. Night I alludes to the abortive peace negotiations with France in 1796-7 and the prospect of an agreement allocating Holland to Britain and Italy to France as spheres of influence. It also refers to British victories on the Nile and at Acre which prolong hostilities by energizing British patriotism while also silencing opposition at home. Nights II and VII describe the growing industrialization and militarization of England, and the creation of imperialist commercial markets by the war. Night VII also narrates the hardening of French revolutionary fervour into Napoleon's continental imperialism as well as British military defeats in the Netherlands and increased domestic repression of discontent generated by these failures. Finally Night IX's apocalypse represents "a transformation of the discontent after 1799 into an insurrection for peace, Albion's final awakening--in Britain *and* in France" (319). According to Erdman, Night IX has the British people order their military to cease operations against France since Blake consistently regards Britain as the aggressor. If left alone, the revolutionary impulse of Luvah "will assume a form more creative than Napoleonism" (347).

Another early work in this tradition is Mark Schorer's *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, in which *The Four Zoas* represents an elaboration and deepening of Blake's "psychology of revolution" (312). Schorer also draws comparisons between the Zoas and psychological faculties in the context of a reading stressing the necessity of self-transformation prior to any enactment of social transfor... ation. *The Four Zoas* thus expounds a "democracy of the faculties, the achievement of 'identity,' [which] precedes and makes possible the brotherhood of men and nations" (314). A crucial moment in the creation of such a psychic democracy is the "restoration of harmony" between Luvah and Vala in Night IX, paving the way for a "transmutation" of the Zoas into a brotherhood (334-35).

A more recent critic, David Fuller, continues this trend of interpretation. In *Blake's Heroic Argument* he informs us that his treatment of *The Four Zoas* will include "some translation, psychological and social, of symbolic writing" (95). A few pages later he begins to sound much like Schorer:

> a perfect unity in the individual cannot be a purely individual matter: a social, intellectual and spiritual context which fosters and reflects the individual's republic of equal loving, co-operating and integrated powers is essential.
>
> (97)

Thus the poem functions on two fronts, and raises "issues of internal harmony reflecting and creating a co-operative society" (160). Even though the pastoral episode of Vala's Garden Scene "fails to convince as a possible vision of regeneration . . . , [Blake] simply makes Luvah and Vala recover rather than show how" their recovery is still a prelude to the brotherhood achieved between people and within the individual (159-60). Consequently "the poem ends with the restored Albion whose recovered integration signifies both" (161).

Finally Jackie DiSalvo's *War of Titans* takes this tradition in a Marxist direction. According to DiSalvo, Blake's historical position as a witness to the early development of industrial capitalism and bourgeois ideology makes it possible for him to write "the first consciously historical epic of social and cultural evolution" which simultaneously "explores the psychic structure of bourgeois civilization" (11, 14). Blake anticipates Marx and

> makes a breakthrough to something like Marx's theory of historical evolution . . . in which a primitive communist Eden characterized by egalitarian sexual relations is destroyed through the rise of hierarchic class civilizations based upon such institutions as private property, the family, and the state.
>
> (61, 141)

Consequently DiSalvo organizes the nights comprising *The Four Zoas* into a teleology reflecting a Marxist historical materialism. The poem thus moves from one mode of production to the next, imitating the dialectical progress of history as it journeys from primitive communism to its ultimate socialist recuperation. Nights I-IV depict the rise and fall of ancient civilization; Night V narrates the appearance of a radical Christianity and its subsequent distortion under feudalism; Nights VI-VIII describe the rise of industrial capitalism in England; and Night IX envisions the revolutionary future (15).

By creating a materialist theory of history, Blake not only records the revolutionary upheavals which accompany social transformation but also provides us with an understanding of history as the achievement of humanity's collective productive forces. In a society founded on class conflict and the exploitation of labour, such a theory becomes a revolutionary ideology capable of transforming the minds of the exploited, encouraging a belief in their own power to generate further social change. In this context Blake's theory of the imagination becomes a

precursor to what Marx will later call praxis--with the ability of the imagination to humanize nature becoming for Marx a belief "that human beings and their ideas are created by themselves in the active, collective, historical process in which they . . . make their world" and in doing so, make themselves (60).

Another way in which Blake fosters a psychology of revolution, and also anticipates Marx, is by opposing his theory of the imagination and human activity to the "false consciousness" of a bourgeois ideology which promotes passivity on the part of the oppressed (22). Two components of this ideology are a Newtonian "mechanical materialism" and a Lockean epistemology in which individualized and unrelated atoms are propelled through the universe by laws unrelated to human intervention (55). A world dominated by this scientific outlook is simultaneously one in which individualized social atoms (i.e. workers) are passively manipulated by market forces which determine their value as commodities in a capitalist economy. Yet perhaps the most egregious aspect of false consciousness is the religious legacy of Milton's interpretation of Genesis which rationalizes "social tyranny in the later books of his epic as the inevitable cyclic unwinding of the original Fall" (148). Blake, however, seeks to redress the wrong committed by Milton in *Paradise Lost* by reinterpreting Genesis and Revelation in the light of a radical protestant tradition in which Eden becomes the original social utopia and the Fall its perversion through the introduction of covetousness (private property) into its erstwhile harmonious relations.

Much like its companion trend, this psycho-historical tradition also neglects the excess of affect which accompanies the semantic content of the poem's imagery. An example of this can be found in Erdman's characterization of the Nuptial Song from Night I as a victory song celebrating British military triumphs in the Near East. In order to construct this interpretation, Erdman draws together lines from Night I which are, in some cases, part of the context in which

the song appears and in others, part of a context appearing five pages later having no obvious intertextual connection, such as imagery or diction, to support its affiliation with the Nuptial Song. The tenuous nature of some of Erdman's inferences compels him to admit that they "evidently" celebrate the British defeat of Napoleon (319). That Erdman sometimes strains the limits of what counts as a persuasive reading is a view shared by David Fuller who observes that "Erdman has engaged in an elaborate defence through concessive footnotes with a certain amount of special pleading about what may have been for which there is not evidence" (288). While constructing an elaborate and sometimes questionable interpretive context, Erdman ignores what the immediate narrative says about the Nuptial Song and its orchestration by "Elemental Gods" who "their thunderous Organs blew; creating/ Delicious Viands" (13: 22-23). This reference to "Delicious Viands" connects the music produced by the song to the feast motif and relates it to other instances of this motif such as the "gnawing pain" of Tharmas whom Enion dismembers, unravels and implicitly eats (13: 23; 5: 16). Moreover, the contrapuntal nature of the Nuptial Song also reflects the counterpoint of the music accompanying Enitharmon's labour as she gives birth to Orc. It too is divided between "living music float[ing] upon the air" and "horrid trumpets of the deep" (58: 6,20). A context thus exists which relates the dismemberment of Night I to scenes of incest and Oedipal rivalry in Night V associated with Orc's birth, accomplishing this through the contrapuntal nature of the music imagery in both nights. Consequently the textual evidence suggests a psychoanalytic reading in which the opposition between incest and castration becomes marked as a dialectic of dismemberment. In other words, one can argue that we are dealing with a primitive sexual fantasy of the phallic mother which finds its way into the text through relations passed over by Erdman's reading.

Another problematic aspect of these interpretations is that they also portray Albion's regeneration as a democratic condition within consciousness and society. At no point do they comment on the contradiction between Blake's egalitarian goals and the gender-coded paradigm he uses to articulate them. It is always assumed that Vala's Garden Scene depicts the harmonious reconciliation of Luvah, Vala, Tharmas and Enion *en route* to the creation of a regenerated and democratic brotherhood. These critics do not closely examine Night IX's pastoral interlude and therefore neglect the gender-coded hierarchy used by Blake as a blueprint for psychic and social redemption. Likewise, they also fail to discuss this hierarchy as a patriarchal symbolic order to whose construction and deconstruction Kristeva's psychoanalytic approach can sensitize us.

Only DiSalvo recognizes the sexist nature of Blake's redemptive scheme. The correlation between Blakean imagination and Marxist praxis assumes a gender-coded binary structure even though both dynamics are supposedly fundamental to the production of an egalitarian society. The human relationship to nature in both cases entails "the impact of human activity in time . . . upon the object world of space . . . through which human beings exert mastery over their historical destiny" (166). This relationship between the human and the natural, time and space, activity and passivity, is organized by binary metaphors placing 'masculine' characteristics over and above their 'feminine' counterparts. DiSalvo becomes quite explicit about Blake's "misogynist implications" when she acknowledges his personification of "woman-as-nature" in terms of woman "as creation rather than creator . . . [;] she remains a lesser being" (180-81).

Although DiSalvo acknowledges the contradictory nature of the hierarchy Blake presupposes in order to achieve his revolutionary egalitarian society, she does not detect the textual undercurrents which surface in Vala's Garden Scene as a site where this hierarchy can be subverted. Unlike other critics, DiSalvo does

not interpret this scene as a landmark of harmonious regeneration. Instead, Vala's garden remains a form of female entrapment as a motherly Vala reproduces the "societal chains and the excessive hold of maternal love in an otherwise atomistic society" (336). Deprived of every other outlet for the exercise of constructive power and dominated by their fathers, brothers and husbands, women, DiSalvo argues, ultimately retaliate against their own children. Vala's supervision of an infant Tharmas and Enion in the garden is taken to be just such a hegemonic exercise by DiSalvo who misses the subtlety of Vala's efforts to use her maternal position to deftly undermine her subordination to Luvah, a subordination which DiSalvo also neglects to mention. Once again, Vala's subversion of this hierarchy is not an isolated incident but is part of a broader dynamic in which maternal configurations in Blake's art criticism and poetry become sites for a conflictual process best illuminated by the psychoanalytic theories of Julia Kristeva.

We have already discussed the ways in which Kristeva's outlook, though predominantly psychoanalytic, politicizes psychoanalysis by first participating in a feminist revision of this discursive formation and then using it to expose the phallocentric political agenda of cultural productions as well as the maternal pressures seeking to subvert them. The inherently political and subversive nature of her concepts is further revealed through the use that she makes of certain terms borrowed from the writings of Georges Bataille. Chief among these is the concept of heterogeneity which Kristeva introduces in *Revolution in Poetic Language* as a *heteronomy* of drives constituting a "shattered and doubly differentiated site of conflict and rejection" (167). What she means by "doubly differentiated" is the "conflictual aspect of drives" comprising the semiotic, and the signifying process between it and the symbolic (167-168). The semiotic is itself a "doubled, shattered" operation divided between anal-sadistic driver motility and its symbolic regulation (169). This division is, however, also

> *one of the foundations* of the signifying function . . . [which] will be repressed or reorganised by the constraints imposed by signifying social reality, but will nevertheless return *projecting itself* onto the structured surface--disturbing and reorganizing it (as "poetry"). . . .
>
> (169)

Hence the differentiation comprising the semiotic is repressed by the symbolic yet in returning to disrupt it, the semiotic produces a second kind of differentiation. The conflictual process generated by such a return is discussed by Kristeva in language which is suggestively political. It is a "materialist dialectic" in which the repressed and unconscious semiotic exists in a condition of struggle with its symbolic constraints (167). Finally this conflictual "deconstruction of the nervous system" is in keeping with orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis, which is "more than a theory of dualism, it is a theory of *contradiction* and of *struggle*" (170).

The inherently political and subversive nature of heterogeneity is reinforced by Bataille's original coinage of the term. Bataille defines heterogeneity in opposition to the homogeneous which is the central characteristic of a bourgeois, capitalist mode of production. In "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" Bataille identifies the homogeneous part of society as being

> made up of those men who own the means of production or the money *destined for their upkeep or purchase.* It is exactly the middle segment of the so-called capitalist or bourgeois class. . . .
>
> (138)

What homogenizes bourgeois society is the common denominator of money. All individuals in a capitalist society are measured monetarily in terms of what they can profitably produce with the owners of the means of production being worth the most. In opposition to this homogeneity, Bataille arrays two forms of the heterogeneous. One is made up of a variety of monarchist, religious, military and

fascist formations which move in a tendentially upward direction, maintaining a position of superiority with respect to the homogeneous middle-class. In times of economic and political crisis these formations become rallying points and defenders of a threatened homogeneity. The other heterogeneous formation is the more downwardly mobile industrial proletariat excluded from the profit defining homogeneous society. Ultimately "a labourer is, with regard to a homogeneous person (boss, bureaucrat, etc.) a stranger, a man of another nature, of a nonreduced, nonsubjugated nature" (138). Although the labourer participates in the process of production, the value generated by his labour power is expropriated as profit in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The labourer is integrated into homogeneous society as a useful element only insofar as his labour is a source of profit. Everything else associated with him is useless and cannot be assimilated by the homogeneous.

This useless something else associated with the very person of the labourer outside of the productive process is designated as "*unproductive* expenditure" by Bataille (142). It consists, among other things, of

> everything rejected by *homogeneous* society as waste . . . Included are the waste products of the human body and certain analogous matter (trash, vermin, etc.); . . . [as well as] the numerous elements or social forms that *homogeneous* society is powerless to assimilate: mobs . . . and impoverished classes. . . .
>
> (142)

The identification of the industrial proletariat with excrement makes it possible for us to link Bataille's notion of heterogeneity with Kristeva's concept of abjection. In his essay on "The Notion of Expenditure" Bataille applies the term "abjection" to this condition of the worker as nothing more than the waste by-product of homogeneous society. The condition of class struggle inherent within bourgeois

society is a process in which the "rich man consumes the poor man's losses, creating for him a category of degradation and *abjection* that leads to slavery" (125; emphasis added). The rich facilitate production "*in order to condemn the working producers to a hideous degradation*" and thereby differentiate themselves "high above human baseness" (126). The heterogenous for Bataille is thus also the abject, both of which are terms charged by the political and economic violence of the class struggle defining homogeneous, bourgeois culture. This linkage of heterogeneity and abjection by Bataille, and his apparent influence on Kristeva, suggests that her own concepts of abjection and heterogeneity (as signifying process) can also be connected, with the uncanny logic of the *pharmakos*/abject conferring undecidabilty upon the conflictual activity of semiotic/symbolic interaction. Finally the overwhelmingly political context of Bataille's concepts intimates that Kristeva not only borrows these terms but also adopts their politically charged milieu.

As further proof that Kristeva's use of such terms as "heterogeneity" and "abjection" is politically as well as psychoanalytically marked, one can point to the fact that Bataille's use of these concepts is similarly overdetermined. In "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" Bataille informs us that heterogeneity is a psychological as well as a class concept:

> The exclusion of *heterogeneous* elements from the *homogeneous* realm of consciousness formally recalls the exclusion of the elements, described (by psychoanalysis) as *unconscious*, which censorship excludes from the conscious ego . . . the *unconscious* must be considered as one of the aspects of the *heterogeneous*.
>
> (141)

Elsewhere in the same essay he reconfirms this correlation, observing that "*heterogeneous* reality . . . is identical to the structure of the *unconscious*" (143).

Moreover, he identifies "various unconscious processes such as dreams or neuroses" with heterogeneous material as a form of waste, expenditure or abjection (142). By making these comparisons, Bataille implicitly identifies class oppression with psychic repression, creating an equation which Kristeva reinscribes in her own work.

Finally neither the working class nor the unconscious passively accepts heterogeneity as a permanent condition of subjugation but actively seeks to subvert the hierarchy established by homogeneous structures. Because of this, "social *homogeneity* is a precarious form, at the mercy of violence . . . [and] must constantly be protected from the various unruly elements that do not benefit from production . . . [and] cannot tolerate the checks that homogeneity imposes on unrest" (139). The "refuse and . . . moral filth" of heterogeneity enters into a threatening "rivalry of horrible grandeur with everything in the world that [is] rich, pure, and brilliant" (127). Although Bataille discusses this threat in exclusively political terms it is clear form prior comments that the danger to homogeneity works itself out on a psychoanalytic level as well. In both the political and psychic realms, heterogeneity functions as a revolutionary potential:

> the general description of the heterogeneous region actually implies it be posited as a constitutive element of the structure of a whole that includes not only imperative forms and impoverished forms but also *subversive forms*. These subversive forms are none other than the lower forms transformed with a view to the struggle against the sovereign forms. The necessity inherent to subversive forms requires that what is low become high, that what is high become low; this is the requirement in which the nature of subversion is expressed.
>
> (167-68)

Political revolution and the return of the repressed are identical in their efforts to subvert the homogeneous formations of capitalism and consciousness. They are part of the same heterogeneous process seeking to reverse the marginalization which subjugates them. Bataille's influence on Kristeva can be seen in her own discussion of heterogeneity and abjection. Even though her use of these concepts functions predominantly on a psychoanalytic level, her work with them continues simultaneously to stress their political dimensions. Kristeva may not be as unequivocal in her revolutionary politics as Bataille yet her reliance on him contributes to a theory of poetry as a potentially subversive discourse. Hence a Kristevan approach by serving as a meeting-point for psychoanalysis and social criticism, helps us understand the conflictual activity in Blake's text and the deconstruction of its gender-coded binaries as episodes in a critique of patriarchal culture.

The Thetic Phase: Nights V And IV

Intertextual Connections

Night V begins with Los engaged in an insane, ritualistic dance which he also performs prior to the creation and binding of Urizen in the previous night. Here we are told, by the narrator, that "Infected Mad he danced on his mountains high & dark as heaven" (57: 1) whereas, in Night IV, we are told that he contemplates the task of rebuilding Urizen "with cold infectious madness" (52: 28). As Donald Ault maintains, the similarity in diction between these two scenes supports the view "that the birth of Orc re-enacts the binding of Urizen" (187). Also, both Los and Enitharmon begin to display characteristics carried over from Night IV and associated with Urizen during the process of his creation/ binding. There he is described as tossing "on his icy bed/ Freezing to solid all beneath"

(52: 21-22) while his mind is "bounded" (54: 1) and "in chains of the mind locked up. In fetters of ice shrinking" (54: 4-5). In Night lV, Urizen is the personification of this process of freezing or being frozen, which also binds and shrinks. Throughout the poem, and especially at the beginning of Night VII, where Urizen confronts the fiery, bound Orc, images of freezing are associated with a binding and shrinking which is sexually repressive. Hence in Night IV we are told that Urizen's "bones of solidness froze over all his nerves of joy" (54: 14). Although, in Night IV, it appears as if Los is doing the freezing and repressing, this is only partially the case since prior to his binding of Urizen, Urizen is already described as actively freezing that which is "*beneath*" him (52: 22; emphasis added). In this sense, Urizen occupies the same position as Los who works on Urizen while "Urizen *beneath* deep groand" (53: 10; emphasis added). The text thus suggests an identity between Los and Urizen which becomes more explicit when we are told that Los "became what he was doing he was himself transformed" (55: 23). This intercontamination between Los and Urizen, in which Los becomes Urizen, makes a number of things possible. It enables us to speak of the formation of the body (and the bodily image) as a Urizenic event, insofar as this creation also entails sexual repression. Although Los is the ostensible agent of Tha mas in bin ling Urizen, it is in fact Urizen who performs such repressive acts as an embodiment of prohibitive forces. Hence when Los goes on in Night V to enchain Orc, we are really dealing with another Urizenic and repressive act.

While Night IV has Urizen in a "*stoned* stupor" (52: 20; emphasis added) prior to his binding by Los, Night V describes Los, before the birth and binding of Orc, as "fixd into one stedfast bulk [in which] his features *stonify*" (57: 2; emphasis added). The opening passage of this Night goes on to discuss both Los and Enitharmon in terms clearly related to Urizen. Enitharmon's "immortal limbs freeze stiffning pale inflexible [while]/ His feet shrink withring from the deep

shrinking and withering" (57: 6-7). Both Los and Enitharmon are "Shrunk into a fixed space" (57: 12) with their "senses unexpansive" (57: 19). Consequently they have become thoroughly contaminated by Urizen's repressive agency which not only freezes the thrilling sexual nerves of joy but also binds and limits the expansive energetic openness which comes by way of "an improvement of sensual enjoyment" (*MHH* 14). Blake's simile describing their shrinking fibres "withring beneath/ As plants witherd by winter" (57: 8-9) also has marked Urizenic overtones. The withering effects of winter are also foregrounded by Blake in another, earlier poem entitled "To Winter" which Frye interprets as an early premonition of Urizen (*Symmetry* 182). Urizen will eventually emerge from "the direful monster" (l.9) of this poetical sketch as one who "withers all in silence" and "freezes up frail life" (ll.11-12). Thus on the threshold of Orc's birth, both Los and Enitharmon stand already co-opted by a frozen Urizenic paranoia about unrestrained sexual energy.

The Music-as-Feast Motif

From what has been said above, one might think that Orc would be immediately shackled upon entering the world of the poem. Yet the passage describing his birth is cross-referenced in ways which suggest conflict and struggle. The most prominent feature of such strife is the contrapuntal music which accompanies Orc's birth as a resurfacing of the feast from Night I. More to the point, it is important to remember that the musical accompaniment provided for the feast "*is* the food at the Feast" (Ault 79):

> The Nuptial Song arose from all the thousand thousand spirits
> Over the joyful Earth & Sea, and ascended into the Heavens
> For elemental Gods their thunderous Organs blew; creating
> Delicious Viands.
>
> (13: 20-23)

Not only does the music become food, but this food is suggestively of a perverse sexual nature, produced as it is by "thunderous Organs" which connote a form of oral sexuality when one reads "organ" as a sexual pun for penis. Moreover, the music/ feast is structured contrapuntally between "Demons of Waves" who "Stretch their immortal hands to smite the gold & silver Wires/ And with immortal Voice soft warbling fill the Earth & Heaven" (13: 23-14: 2), and "Cavernous dwellers" who "With doubling Voices & loud Horns wound round sounding/ . . . fill'd the enormous Revelry, Responsing!" (14: 3-4). In Night V there are also "two forms of music [which] enact an amazing warfare on the surface of the text" (Ault 187). On the one hand we have a "living music" (58: 6) made up of "the soft pipe the flute the viol organ harp & cymbal/ And the sweet sound of silver voices" (58: 3-4). Although composed of woodwind, string and percussion instruments, as well as a chorus, this orchestra eventually becomes concentrated into the sound of "immortal harps" (58: 5). On the other hand, we not only have the competing "groans of Enitharmon" (58: 9) as a vocal counterpoint but also hear "The horrid trumpets of the deep" (58: 20). In both Nights I and V we are thus confronted with musical arrangements in which the softness of stringed instruments is answered by harsh trumpet blasts.

What we observe then is a contrapuntal and conflictual form of music which doubles as a feast in which the food is sexual. That we are engaged in an orally sadistic feast is suggested by the context provided by Night I, in which the feast/ music originally appears. Although this context will be discussed in more detail below, some of the more important examples of oral sadism from Night I concern images of drinking: being "born to drink up all his Powers" (10: 25) or "drink the lives of Men" (14: 14). In both cases we are dealing with images that strongly suggest castration by phallic women relating specifically to "Female Emanations" who "Once born for the sport & amusement of Man [are] now born to

drink up all his Powers" (10: 25). Considering the fact that the organs which produce food for the musical feast are euphemistic substitutes for male penises, the implied consumption of this food *could* be taken as a form of castration. Yet line 10: 25 above reappears in Night IX in a context suggesting not only castration but *also* incestuous gratification:

> And Many Eternal Men sat at the golden feast to see
> The female form now separate They shuddered at the horrible thing
> Not born for the sport and amusement of Man but born to drink
> up all his powers. . . .
>
> (133: 5-7)

Although this passage narrates a scene of castration and dismemberment, we are told a few lines later that "Man is a Worm wearied with joy" (133: 11). The obvious phallic significance of "Worm" suggests that Man's weariness is due to sexual excess which not only produces joy but perhaps yields the peculiar kind of "infant joy" which Tharmas eulogizes in Night I (4:32). Hence we are left with a conflict surrounding the phenomenon of dismemberment as a form of castration and possible incestuous gratification.

This digression from the scene of Orc's birth is necessary if we want to understand, in the most preliminary fashion, the significance of the contrapuntal music imagery it contains. Such understanding can only be achieved once we painstakingly tease out the connecting strands between associations related to the feast motif which spread themselves out through the entire poem and also into some of Blake's other works. Hence the conflictual nature of oral sadism in the poem implicates itself into the music-as-feast motif through the suggestiveness of the organs which produce it. The contrapuntal nature of the music becomes a disguised way in which oral sadism surfaces in this scene as a conflict between castration and incest. Finally it is the work of Julia Kristeva which helps us place

these uncanny relations into a comprehensible framework. As mentioned earlier, music itself, and the musicality of poetic language are the most pronounced avenues of disruption through which the anal sadistic drive motility of the semiotic pulverizes symbolic stability in order to recreate it as signifying process. For Kristeva, music is one of the "nonverbal signifying systems . . . constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic" (*Revolution* 24). Although the symbolic asserts its dominance with the onset of the castration complex, the anal sadism of the semiotic infiltrates this repressive order through the rhythm of linguistic oralization, displacing anal sadistic drives onto oral sadistic impulses. Consequently, what Blake provides us with in the aggressive and conflictual form of the music-as-feast motif is an allegory of this psychic dynamic figured forth as an antiphonal banquet serving castrated flesh and the child's autoerotic body-in-pieces. Also Blake's introduction of contrapuntal music into the scene of Orc's birth signals the forthcoming struggle of the semiotic's incestuous dynamic (i.e. Orc and Enitharmon) *against* a milieu which is predominantly symbolic. While the music is split between chords of incest and castration, Orc's birth and binding will enact this split, producing, at one point in the night, an image of the bound Orc who, nevertheless, receives sexual and incestuous nourishment. In both cases we are dealing with configurations of signifying process.

The Chain Motif

Orc's birth thus begins against a backdrop of Urizenic repression. The cosmological "wheels of turning darkness" (58: 7) which begin their "solemn revolutions" (58: 8) during Enitharmon's labour are also the "thunderous wheels" (52: 26) of Los's furnaces as he Urizenically contemplates Urizen's creation in mills and works of "wheels resistless" (53: 4). Likewise, the figure of winter as he "spread[s] his wide black wings across from pole to pole" (58: 12) is the hovering

expanse of Urizen in IV, "stretching out from North to South/ In mighty power" (52: 24-25). Finally, the "dismal dance" performed by "Grim frost . . . & terrible snow linkd in a marriage chain" (58: 13) anticipates the "chain of Jealousy" (60: 22) which appears later on in the night and retroactively links Night V with the binding of Urizen in Night IV.

There are many references to chains in Night IV which can be used as points of intersection between Urizen's binding and the binding of Orc in Night V. In IV Los uses the anvils of Urthona to forge "link by link the chains of sorrow" (53: 6). As the Prophet of Eternity, Los beats "on his iron links & links of brass" (53: 22). He works on these with "hate Eternal . . . beating/ The Links of fate link after link an endless chain of sorrows" (53: 27-28). Ultimately, Urizen finds himself "in chains of the mind lockd up/ [and] In fetters of ice shrinking" (54: 4-5) with Los beating "on his fetters" (54: 6), and pouring "iron sodor & sodor of brass" (54: 7). Not only is Urizen's mind bound and enclosed, but so also is his entire nervous system and sensuality, making his vast writhing spine "like the linked chain" (54: 11). Yet the most convincing connection of chain imagery between Nights IV and V concerns the way in which it is, in both cases, a temporal chain. In Night IV Los can be seen

> forming under his heavy hand the hours
> The days & years. in chains of iron round the limbs of Urizen
> Linkd hour to hour & day to night & night to day & year to year
> In periods of pulsative furor.
>
> (52:29-53:3)

Likewise, the chain with which Los binds Orc in Night V is also a chain of time:

> Every day he viewd the fiery youth
> With silent fear & his immortal cheeks grew deadly pale
> Till many a morn & many a night passd over in dire woe

Forming a girdle in the day & bursting it at night
The girdle was formd by day by night was burst in twain
Falling down on the rock an iron chain link by link lockd
Enitharmon beheld the bloody chain of nights & days
Depending from the bosom of Los & how with griding pain
He went each morning to his labours with the spectre dark
Calld it the chain of Jealousy.

(60: 13-22)

Although we are not explicitly told that Los forges this chain in "periods of pulsative furor" as we are in Night IV, this information is already implicitly contained in the chain's temporality (as a chain of nights and days). That is to say, the temporal units which constitute it are directly linked to "periods" of time contained within the chain of Night IV.

The Demon's Narrative

Having argued, up until now, that the central concern of Night V is the Oedipus complex and its repression, we can now approach this scene as perhaps the most crucial event of the entire poem. Prior to the unequivocal depiction of the Family Romance involving Los, Enitharmon and Orc, we are provided with a narrative told by "Enormous Demons" (58: 21) which previews it as a kind of preface, as if to underline the importance of the episode.

The most significant physical features of the new-born Orc are his "burning Eyes" (58: 19) which figure prominently in the Oedipal strife between Los and himself, as well as in the story narrated by the Enormous Demons who awake at his birth. These demons initially identify Orc as a reincarnation of Luvah, which is partially correct since Orc is described "rending his way" (58: 17) through Enitharmon while Luvah, in Night I, emerges at one point "Bursting forth from

the loins of Enitharmon" (16: 9). This connection between Luvah and Orc is important, in the context of the demons' narrative, since it introduces the topic of male conflict, initiated by women, into Night V's Oedipal plot. Hence prompted by the birth of Luvah/Orc the demons rehearse the rivalry motif from Night I:

> Crying Luvah King of Love thou art the King of rage & death
> Urizen cast deep darkness round him raging Luvah pourd
> The spears of Urizen from Chariots round the Eternal tent
> Discord began then yells & cries shook the wide firma[m]ent. . . .
>
> (58:22-25)

This passage almost duplicates the account given in Night I by "messengers from Beulah" (21:8) of the "Wars of Death Eternal" (21:15) in which "Luvah and Urizen contend in a war around the holy tent" (21:12):

> Urizen cast deep darkness round him silent brooding death
> Eternal death to Luvah raging Luvah pourd
> The Lances of Urizen from chariots. round the holy tent
> Discord began & yells & cries shook the wide firmament. . . .
>
> (22:12-15)

Immediately following their recapitulation of male rivalry from Night I, the demons ask after Vala in ways which blame her for this conflict:

> Where is Sweet Vala gloomy prophet where the lovely form
> That drew the body of Man from heaven into this dark Abyss
> Soft tears & sighs where are you come forth shout on bloody fields
> Shew thy soul Vala shew thy bow & quiver of secret fires. . . .
>
> (59: 1-4)

As Ault maintains, the demons "now project onto Vala sole responsibility for the composite actions involved in drawing the body of Man into the Abyss" (192). Specifically, the demons are alluding to an episode from Night III in which Vala

becomes the reason for a deadly struggle between Luvah and Albion, identified respectively as the "Son of Man" (41: 2) and "Man" (41: 1) by Ahania who narrates the details of their fight:

> And Luvah strove to gain dominion over the mighty Albion
> They strove together above the Body where Vala was inclos'd
> And the dark Body of Albion left prostrate upon the crystal pavement
> Coverd with boils from head to foot. the terrible smitings of Luvah. . . .
>
> (41:13-16)

With Albion and Luvah cast in the roles of father and son in their struggle over Vala, we are suggestively near the triangular structure of the Family Romance, with Vala the obvious candidate for mother.

This reading is further reinforced by the fact that Vala is wielding a bow whose characteristics link it to another bow used by Urizen in his struggle with Fuzon from *The Book of Ahania*. Having questioned after the whereabouts of Vala, the demons go on to address her as if she were suddenly made to appear by their search:

> Draw thy bow Vala from the depths of hell thy *black* bow draw
> And twang the bow string to our howlings let thine arrows black
> Sing in the Sky as once they sang upon the hills of Light
> When dark Urthona wept in torment of the secret pain. . . .
>
> (59:5-8; emphasis added)

In *The Book of Ahania* Urizen also uses a "Bow *black*" (*BA* 3:23; emphasis added) in the context of what is clearly another replay of Oedipal strife between father and son. The poem begins with the character of Fuzon identified as the "Son of Urizen's silent burnings" (*BA* 2:9), a reference not only to Fuzon's filial status but also to Urizen's own repressed incestuous desires. Fuzon's fiery appearance also corresponds to Orc's defining feature as "fiery child" (59:25) and to the "fiery

sons" (59:12) of Urthona which the demons speak about in their own sub-plot. Hence

> 1: Fuzon, on a chariot iron-wing'd
> On spiked flames rose; his hot visage
> Flam'd furious! sparkles his hair & beard
> Shot down his wide bosom and shoulders.
>
> (*BA* 2: 1-4)

As Urizen's fiery son, Fuzon moulds a "Globe of wrath" (*BA* 2: 16) and hurls it at his father. Flying towards its target, the globe takes on phallic dimensions, "Lengthning into a hungry beam" (*BA* 2: 19). Although Urizen attempts to defend himself, the shaft strikes home and divides his "cold loins" (*BA* 2: 29), castrating him. Wounded, Urizen takes hold of Ahania "his parted soul" (*BA* 2: 32) and attempts to repossess her since Fuzon's phallic attack, in castrating and "dividing" (*BA* 2: 29) Urizen, also appears to have separated him from his Emanation. Hence he kisses her and weeps over her, jealously hiding her in darkness and silence as a way of presumably keeping her out of Fuzon's hands. Fuzon, meanwhile, dominates the sexual landscape as an erect and potent, phallic "fiery beam" (*BA* 2: 44) and "pillar of fire" (*BA* 2: 45).

Nevertheless, Urizen remains undefeated as he prepares his "Bow black" (*BA* 3: 23) from the horns of a vanquished serpent, anticipating through this act his own retaliatory, castrating potential (i.e. serpent = phallus). With this bow, Urizen launches a poisoned rock at Fuzon and kills him, nailing his dead corpse to the Tree of Mystery which becomes a kind of totem defending against all manifestations of incest. Hence the poem ends with a lament by Ahania who yearns for the return of a primordial incestuous paradise and a time when Urizen was more permissive than he now is:

9: When he gave my happy soul
To the sons of eternal joy:
When he took the daughters of life.
Into my chambers of love:

(*BA* 5: 15-18)

The fact that Vala also wields a black bow makes it possible to condense the narrative of Oedipal strife from *The Book of Ahania* onto the conflict between Luvah and Urizen which the demons evoke and blame on Vala. Because of these intertextual cross-references, the Luvah/Urizen conflicts depicted in both Nights I and IV can be read as plots containing a latent Oedipal content which *The Book of Ahania* makes manifest. Hence Ault is correct when he describes Vala's black arrows as "phallic weapons wielded by a female to inflict the 'secret pain'--sexual division, possibly castration" (192). Although Vala wields these weapons, this does not necessarily mean that she is the one who castrates. It can instead be simply another way of indicating that she, as the mother and sexual object of contention, is the inadvertent cause of Oedipal strife between father and son and of their mutual attempts to castrate each other. Finally it should not matter that Blake uses Luvah/Urizen/Vala to define the triangular structure of the Family Romance in one context while using Fuzon/Urizon/Ahania in another. In saying this I am also taking my lead from Ault, maintaining, along with him, the argument that these characters are identified more by the relations and structures in which they appear than by any inherent or substantial feature. The body of Blake's work can thus be seen as a text in which he repeatedly confronts incest and other Oedipal issues by expressing this syndrome through a variety of characters in different poems.

Having once broached the topic of incest and Oedipal strife, the demons introduce the character of Urthona as father figure and begin to focus their story

in ways which anticipate both the creation of the chain of Jealousy and the binding of Orc. To begin, Urthona is "Torn by black storms & ceaseless torrents of consuming fire" (59: 11). The images describing Urthona's fragmentation are taken from contexts depicting castration of the son (black storms) and of the father (torrents of consuming fire). Accordingly, his decomposition contains, in itself, the dynamics of father/son Oedipal strife. Nevertheless, Urthona remains a father figure in the cycle of Oedipal conflict which the demons go on to narrate. Initially we are told that "Within his breast his fiery sons [are] chaind down & filled with cursings" (59: 12). This line thus intersects both with Fuzon's fiery appearance and Orc's, while also anticipating Orc's bondage. It also presages the total defeat of the son's incestuous desire. Yet we next see Urthona "breathing terrible blood & vengeance gnashing his teath with pain/ [as he] Let loose the Enormous Spirit in the darkness of the deep" (59: 13-14). This parallels the birth of Orc and also describes the kind of rending and divison previously associated with castration. The implication here is that the son is now victorious. However, two lines later we are back inside Urthona's ribs (i.e. breast) where serpents are produced "whose souls are flames of fire" (59: 16). Even though the serpentine "fiery sons" are reimprisoned, this return to the beginning of the cycle sets it revolving once again, hinting at the possible undecidability of this conflict. Moreover, as Ault observes, this aspect of the demons' story also anticipates the formation of the chain of Jealousy as the repetitive bursting and reformation of the girdle which binds Los's chest. While this strife ostensibly ends with Los's binding of Orc and the ultimate victory of the symbolic, its connection to the earlier cycle involving Urthona's "fiery sons" suggests, in its own subtle way, that this victory is a tenuous one, and that there are, in fact, no victors.

When "red Orc" (59: 21) is born we are told that Los's "fiery Eyelids/ faded" (59: 22-23): an indication of the threatened passage of sexual power which this birth presages. Following this, we have the clear and unequivocal portrayal of the Oedipus complex as Orc receives sexual nourishment at Enitharmon's breast and simultaneously plans the death of Los as his rival. In the midst of this scene, Los builds Golgonooza, for the first time in the poem, as a defensive gesture against both incest and Oedipal strife. Golgonooza will be built a second time in Night VII for similar reasons, yet the manner of its defense will be somewhat different than the male rivalry it continues to foster in Night V:

> Enitharmon nursd her fiery child in the dark deeps
> Sitting in darkness. over her Los mournd in anguish fierce
> Coverd with gloom. the fiery boy grew fed by the milk
> Of Enitharmon. Los around her builded pillars of iron
> And brass & silver & gold fourfold in dark prophetic fear
> For now he feard Eternal Death & uttermost Extinction
> He builded Golgonooza on the Lake of Udan Adan
> Upon the Limit of Translucence then he builded Luban
> Tharmas laid the Foundations & Los finishd it in howling woe
>
> But when fourteen summers & winters had revolved over
> Their solemn habitation Los beheld the ruddy boy
> Embracing his bright mother & beheld malignant fires
> In his young eyes discerning plain that Orc plotted his death. . . .
>
> (59: 25-60:9)

As mentioned, Orc's status as "fiery boy" and "fiery child" links him to the "fiery sons" of Urthona and Fuzon's "hot visage," all of them participating in renditions

of the same Oedipal drama. Likewise, the pillars of iron, brass, silver and gold which Los uses in building Golgonooza as a defense, are also materially present in the "vast instruments" (73:17) used by Urizen to measure and fix the universe into Vortexes as a defense against repeatedly falling into an abject "bosom of slime" (71: 27) in Night VII. This is thus another realization of Los as Urizenic paternal figure.

When the defensive measures of Golgonooza fail, Los resorts to forging the chain of Jealousy out of the raw material of his own emotional turmoil, and uses it to bind Orc in what appears to be a final solution:

> He siezd the boy in his immortal hands
> While Enitharmon followd him weeping in dismal woe
> Up to the iron mountains top & there the Jealous chain
> Fell from his bosom on the mountain. The Spectre dark
> Held the fierce boy Los naild him down binding around his limbs
> The accursed chain O how bright Enitharmon howld & cried
> Over her son. Obdurate Los bound down her loved Joy. . . .
>
> (60: 24-30)

The Feeding of Orc and the Starvation of Urizen

Once Orc is separated from his mother and bound down, Los folds Enitharmon in a "cold white cloud" (61:7) and places her "into his labyrinth" (61: 8), displaying Urizen's emotional frigidity and his possessive concealment of Ahania in *The Book of Ahania.* Yet, in spite of the appearance of finality that these measures have, there is enough evidence to suggest that Orc's incestuous desires and hungers still survive and achieve a measure of satisfaction even in these repressive circumstances. Hence, when we are told that Orc is "Concenterd into Love of Parent Storgous Appetite Craving" (61:10), this appears to be a highly

convoluted way of saying that he hungers for the incestuous supplies he formerly found at his mother's breast. Even though his "limbs" are "bound down" by the paternal function, they nevertheless "mock at his chains" (61: 11) because they are still capable of receiving such nourishment. These supplies take the shape of a "flame/ Of circling fire [which] unceasing plays to feed them [i.e. limbs] with life" (61: 11-12). Moreover, this flame corresponds to Orc's incendiary nature, both as the "fiery child" feeding at his mother's breast and as the "ruddy boy" who plans his father's death with "malignant fires." Yet there are more than just these textual cross-references to indicate the survival of Orc's incestuous passion. Specifically Orc's limbs are not just fed by any flame, but by a flame made up of

> ten thousand thousand spirits
> Of life [who] lament around the Demon going forth & returning
> At his enormous call they flee into the heavens of heavens
> And back return with wine & food. Or dive into the deeps
> to bring the thrilling joys of sense to quell his ceaseless rage. . . .
>
> (61: 13-17)

The "thrilling joys of sense" with which Orc's limbs are fed correspond to Urizen's "nerves of joy" (54: 14) prior to their frozen solidification by Los's binding activity. In both cases we are, I believe, dealing with a purely preoedipal and incestuous joy. As well, the equation here of food with incestuous, sexual gratification provides us with a significant perspective on the feast motif found throughout the poem. It is also important to note that what gets fed is not a specific organ or appendage, but the aggregate of Orc's "limbs" characterized in their plural form. What this does is subtly define the nature of the sexuality in question as belonging to a phase of development when sexual gratification is experienced through body parts, "limbs" or erotogenic zones during anaclisis. The body has not yet been organized by a Gestalt, nor has it been individualized within

the Symbolic, and its sexuality confined to gender-specific gentalia. Instead the body is fragmented into a variety of parts or zones as the child discovers its own sexuality in each of these areas as a kind of fringe benefit from getting its survival needs met by its mother. Also, the textual cross-reference to Urizen's binding, in Night IV, provides us with grounds to interpret this episode in the context of Kristeva's theory of thetic phase development. The fact that Urizen experiences the "nerves of joy" (54:14) prior to being bound and unified into a body is structurally homologous with anaclitic and auto-erotic sexuality as it corresponds to the semiotic and predates thetic phase development. Hence the intersecton of Urizen's "nerves of joy" with Orc's "thrilling joys of sense" reinforces the sense in which each event overlaps the other in portraying the full body sexuality (albeit fragmented) of anaclisis. This reading transforms the shrinking/binding/creation of Urizen into a figural representation of mirror stage development in which the child enters the thetic phase, begins to assimilate itself to the symbolic, and represses all forms of preoedipal incestuous contact.

A closer look at some of the details of Urizen's formation in Night IV will bear this reading out. Not only are Urizen's "nerves of joy" related to Orc's "thrilling joys of sense" as representations of preoedipal, incestuous contact, but solidification and freezing repression of these nerves brings about a sexual hunger in Urizen which Orc does not experience:

> In ghastly torment sick. within his ribs bloated round
> A craving hungry cavern. Thence arose his channeld
> Throat. then like a red flame a tongue of hunger
> And thirst appeard and a sixth age passed of dismal woe. . . .
>
> (55: 2-5)

That is to say, in being bound, Urizen succumbs to the mirror stage and its corresponding thetic pressures which, in Kristeva's system, ultimately require a

repression of the maternal function. Hence he hungers for the incestuous, anaclitic supplies which Orc still, defiantly, receives and demands. That Orc still has access to the mother is an indication of how the symbolic maintains an uneasy hegemony and represents, in this context, a concession to the semiotic. Accordingly, Orc's feasting while enchained becomes a configuration of Kristeva's signifying process, as Urizen's starvation represents the full effect of what the symbolic seeks. Both begin in conditions of anaclitic, semiotic and incestuous joy yet their divergent fates represent two paths of psycho-sexual development, between shouldering the full burden of symbolic repression or writhing contemptuously in the chains it seeks to impose.

These options are further elaborated through a comparison of Orc's expanded sensuality (albeit in chains) with the enclosed and shrinking perceptions of Urizen in Night IV. Once Orc is fed by his circling, incestuous fire

> His eyes the lights of his large soul contract or else expand
> Contracted they behold the secrets of the infinite mountains
> The veins of gold & silver & the hidden things of Vala
> Whatever grows from its pure bud or breathes a fragrant soul
> Expanded they behold the terrors of the Sun & Moon
> The Elemental Planets & the orbs of eccentric fire. . . .
>
> (61: 18-23)

The penetrating and all encompassing flexibility of Orc's senses reminds one of the opening lines to "Auguries of Innocence" celebrating the ability

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour. . . .
>
> (ll.1-4)

It is also reminiscent of the cleansing of the "doors of perception" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* made possible "by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives." What is of interest to us is that this expansiveness of vision is brought about by an energetic fire, rooted in the body, as "an improvement of sensual enjoyment" (14). The cross-references between these texts and Orc's perceptual ability suggest that the latter is also due to an improvement of sensual enjoyment. More specifically, Orc's capacity to behold "the hidden things of Vala" further focuses this sexuality as possibly incestuous given the associations created in this night between Vala and the Oedipal dynamics contained within *The Book of Ahania*. Consequently the catalogue of Orc's body parts is suggestively sexual and energetic in its imagery. We are told that "His nostrils breathe a fiery flame" (61: 24) and that "his locks" are like forests where the "lion glares" (61: 25) with a fiery vision comparable to that of the tiger from *Experience*, which that poem's Los-like, blacksmith persona also seeks to enchain. Likewise his "bosom" is crossed by "rivers of delight [where] spontaneous flowers/ Drink laugh & sing" (61: 29-30) and where the moth "spreads her silken bed" (61:31). These "rivers of delight," in providing for the nourishment of unrestrained flowers, perform a suggestively maternal and incestuous act, while the moth's "silken bed" is also incestuous, related as it is to Orc's loins "enwove with silken fires" (62: 1) and the significance of fire imagery accumulated throughout this night.

By comparison, Urizen's limbs are frozen, bound, enclosed and shrunk in size, as marks of sexual repression are inscribed by Los on the body he creates. Urizen's Eternal Mind is "bounded" (54: 1) and "in chains of the mind lockd up/ In fetters of ice shrinking" (54: 4-5). Here we can begin to see the structural opposition between the characteristics of sexual and incestuous freedom which define Orc's limbs (fire and expansiveness) and the repressive attributes of Urizen's body (freezing cold and enclosure). Given the hydraulic and mechanistic

model used by Freud in his discussions on the accumulation and release of sexual tension, Blake's imagery of enclosure, in one instance, succinctly captures the kind of sexual repression going on. Hence we are told that "a roof shaggy wild inclosd/ In an orb [Urizen's] fountain of thought" (54: 9-10). Blake's image of roofing a fountain is strikingly visual and aptly communicates an understanding of sexual repression as if one were capping a well which had blown out of control. We are already familiar with some of the other images of repression associated with Urizen's bondage and shackled sexuality. One we have not discussed is the image of his eyes as "two little orbs hiding in two little caves" (54: 21). Not only are the organs of "vision" closed up, but this sense of a cavernous enclosure also reverberates with intertextual echoes from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* where a perception of the infinite, based on enhanced sensuality, must be rescued from the habit of seeing "all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (14).

The Chain-Become-Tree

In spite of the conflictual status of Orc's condition, bound and repressed though writhing, sexually, in his chains, it is the Law which has the final say. After hobbling Orc, both Los and Enitharmon are guilt-stricken and feel "all the sorrow Parents feel" (62: 10). Los repents "that he had chaind Orc upon the mountain" (62: 11) and is prevailed upon by the tears of Enitharmon to release Orc from bondage. In what follows, Blake appears to construct a fantasy or wish, determined by the father's voluntary resignation from positions of authority and sexual hegemony. Los goes up into the mountains resolved to release Orc and "give to Enitharmon/ Her son in tenfold joy & to compensate for her tears/ Even if his own death resulted" (62: 18-20). In other words, Blake has Los, as father and representative of the paternal function, interdict his own Law on behalf of the incestuous dynamic he formerly prohibited, even if this means death at the hands

of his son. Incestuous drives surface, once again, in the text, only this time they manifest themselves as a death wish for the father which the father himself entertains. We thus catch a glimpse of the possible deconstruction of the paternal function in which it nurses, within itself, its own suicidal tendencies as a turn towards the incest it attempts to marginalize and repress.

Yet the law is firmly in place and resists this lapse into self-subversion by taking on a life of its own, independent of the permissive family dynamics Los is willing to introduce. Although Los manufactured the chain from the grief held within his own breast, and personally bound Orc with it, the chain's new-found independent status is signalled by his sudden and "terrible . . . dread of that infernal chain" (62: 13). Thus when Los and Enitharmon return to the scene of primal repression they discover that Orc's

> young limbs had strucken root into the rock & strong
> Fibres had from the Chain of Jealousy *inwove* themselves
> In a swift vegetation round the rock & round the Cave
> And over the immortal limbs of the terrible fiery boy. . . .
>
> (62: 22-25; emphasis added)

While previously, Orc's loins were "inwove" (62: 1) with silken and incestuous fires, these are now replaced by the chain's definitive repression. Consequently Los and Enitharmon struggle in vain to release Orc from bondage. Neither will their tears nor combined suicides "melt the chain of Jealousy" (62: 27) or "unroot the infernal fibres from their rocky bed" (62: 29).

This sense in which the "infernal chain" (62: 32) takes on a life of its own is conveyed, by Blake, through its configuration as a tree, an independent, steadfast organism with a deep and tenaciously firm root system. In Night VII, this figure will be given a position of prominence in Blake's system as the Tree of Mystery, grown from out of Urizen's foot. Blake's use of the chain-become-tree appears

elsewhere in his work although it must be discovered through the intertextual relations between other poems. The "mind-forg'd manacles" (l.8) of "London" are those created by "Church" (l.10) and "Palace" (l.12) as an alliance between religious sexual repression and the oppression of the State. Specifically, these mental chains are psychological restraints having social consequences which are represented in "The Human Abstract" as a tree which "spreads the dismal shade/ Of Mystery" (ll.13-14) while growing "in the Human Brain" (ll.24). This tree is cultivated by religious virtues such as "Pity" (l.1) and "Mercy" (l.3) which are psychologically inculcated to produce regressive sexual and social consequences. These values presuppose a world split between the unfortunate who require pity and mercy, and the powerful who are in a position to give these gifts. Politically such divisions produce a specious peace through the "mutual fear" (l.5) of master and slave. Sexually, this translates into a proliferation of "selfish loves" (l.6) in which the sexes seek to "snare" (l.7) each other: men have the power to possess women who, otherwise, compensate for their lack of power by manipulating men into monogamous traps. What Blake represents as a consequence of mental chains he reproduces as a tree growing within the brain--both become metaphors of social and sexual repression. Although these metaphors are only implicitly related through their consequences in these lyrics, Blake brings them together in *The Four Zoas* through the chain-become-tree. While this combined figure in Night V foregrounds sexual repression, the social consequences of this mind-set are elaborated in Night II. For now, though, the figure is used to drive home the point that we are dealing with an independent and animate repressive force which has taken root

> Into the iron rock & grew a chain beneath the Earth
> Even to the Center wrapping round the Center & the limbs
> Of Orc entering with fibres became one with him a living Chain. . . .
>
> (63: 1-3)

Also we need to consider why Blake gives the Law, as a living chain, an independent and reified status. The answer to this question can, I believe, be found in Freud's contention that the castration complex is a cultural order or structure, transcending any given individual situation. From what we have already seen in section two, it is "the *a priori* condition governing interhuman exchange in the form of exchange of sexual objects" (Laplanche 59) By grounding our individuation and entry into society as gender specific members of a family constellation, the castration complex has an almost universal application regardless of local conscious attempts to either carry out its threats or subvert them. Juliet Mitchell states the case clearly:

> If Freud considered that the actual body of the child on its own was irrelevant to the castration complex, so too did he repeatedly urge that the actual situation of the child, the presence or absence of the father, the real prohibition against masturbation and so on, could be insignificant compared with the ineffable presence of a symbolic threat (the 'event') to which one is inevitably subjected as the price of being human.
>
> (17)

Hence, it would appear that Blake anticipates the cultural and structural pervasiveness of the castration complex in the psychoanalytic theories of such figures as Freud and Lacan.

The foregoing analysis has dealt extensively with the image or figure of the chain as it appears in Nights IV and V. Although other tangential topics have been broached, our main concern has been to demonstrate the significance of chain imagery in the poem as a configuration of incest prohibition representing Kristeva's theory of thetic phase development and Freudian/Lacanian notions of the castration complex as a reified cultural Law. Most strikingly, it is Night V's rendition of the Family Romance which enables us to construe the chain as Blake's

representation of the castration complex--a far-reaching interdictive force, prohibiting incestuous relations between mother and child. Within the context of the psychoanalytic theories of Lacan and Kristeva, the independence of the interdictive "living Chain" would be viewed as the cultural and structural restrictions of the symbolic order. Similarly, the creation of Urizen's body by this chain can be viewed as Blake's own version of the mirror stage, granting a unified image to the child *en route* to individuation within the symbolic. Taken together, both Nights IV and V can be read as Blakean anticipations of what Kristeva will later call the thetic phase.

Finally, the chain's development into a living, reified force only hints at the structural hegemony of the symbolic which Kristeva also identifies with much more than just the repression of incestuous anal and oral sadism. The repression of the semiotic manifests itself socially as political and economic slavery and oppression. If Blake can be said to anticipate Kristeva, then it must be shown how this aspect of the symbolic surfaces in his poetry, if at all. The configuration of these socio-political consequences can, I believe, be found in Urizen's creation of the Mundane Shell in Night II. It is there that we shall find associations already familiar to us from the previous section. Not only does the chain enter into the creation of the Mundane Shell as an order of sexual and political repression but the geometrical structure of the Shell is directly related to the more repressive features of Blake's Human Form Divine. As architect of the Mundane Shell, Urizen employs his children as labourers who appear in clearly delineated forms and execute his plans calling for a measured and delineated universe. Urizen acts through his children and behaves much like the God of Blake's "Descriptive Catalogue" who sets down his line and creates a world of sharply defined objects as a stay against chaos. As we shall see, the chaos against which Urizen defends himself is a specifically female one. Consequently he builds a world which not only

marginalizes women but also exploits their labour as a feature of this repression. As with Blake's aesthetic theory, we are once again dealing with a gender-coded, masculine/feminine binary system whose logocentric alignments are synonymous with the symbolic order as a repressive system.

THE MUNDANE SHELL AS SYMBOLIC ORDER

The Mundane Shell as Defensive Gesture

Intertextual relations exist between the beginning of Night II and Night IV suggesting that both nights are concerned with the security of a phallocentric order. Thus, Albion's command to Urizen to "go forth" (23: 5) in order to build the Mundane Shell parallels Tharmas's directive to Urthona that he also "Go forth" (49: 15) and perform works which will eventually lead to Urizen's formation/binding by Los. In both cases we are also dealing with acts in which male characters empower other males in ways which suggest phallic supremacy and the creation of defensive enclosures against the possibility of incest. In Night II, Albion commands Urizen to take "possession! [and] take this Scepter!" (23: 5): a political gesture ensuring the smooth transition of power which is also sexual, given the phallic significance of "Scepter." Likewise, Tharmas ensures Urthona that the "spungy marrow issuing from [his] splintered bones/ [shall] Bonify" (49: 16-17), promising him a form of phallic potency. Finally, part of Urizen's response to Albion includes the building of a "Bower" (24:7) or "Mundane Shell" (24: 8), as a defense against falling into a condition of what I shall argue is maternal abjection. Also, Tharmas commands Urthona to build a "bower" (49: 19) for Enitharmon, a directive which Los fulfills with the construction of Golgonooza as a defensive stay against incestuous contact between Orc and Enitharmon. Hence both Nights originate with the proclamation of a (patriarchal)

phallic power intended to ensure its own supremacy through the marginalization and confinement of a maternal threat.

While Night V contains a representation of this threat, Night II contains the same incestuous dynamic, albeit in a veiled preoedipal mode. In Night V, Los and Orc are in the midst of Oedipal strife between the incestuous dynamics of feeding and the castration complex which seeks to restrict this. In Night II however, Enion represents this feeding dynamic as a dialectic of dismemberment between both mother and child. On the one hand Enion is cast as "rav'ning like the hungry worm" (23: 17), and becomes, in this sense, a form of infantile, incestuous, phallic hunger. Yet as a "direful hunger craving" (23: 16) she is also an "Abyss" (23: 15), "silent grave" (23: 17), and "draught of Voidness to draw Existence in" (24: 1). Here she becomes the mother who, in providing incestuous supplies from her breast (as both Enion and Enitharmon do), also facilitates the discovery of the child's erotogenic zones through anaclisis, and in a metaphorical sense, can be said to fragment, dismember and *consume* the child. Although this aspect of the poem's imagery will be discussed in more detail below in discussions of Night I, we can, in anticipation of this development, say that Enion here represents this complex dialectic of dismemberment as it occurs within the preoedipal mother-child dyad.

More specifically, this dyad is also pre-thetic and predates mirror stage unity. Hence, Enion is an "Abyss," "Voidness" or "indefinite space" (24: 1,3) which threatens the clear delineation of the human form, and which Urizen must also marginalize, striding "*above*, in fear & pale dismay" (24: 2; emphasis added) while Enion remains "*beneath*" (24: 3) as a "verge of Non Existence" (24: 4; emphasis added). Accordingly, the Mundane Shell is construed as a "beauteous order" (33: 3) and is "walled round/ . . . weighd & ordrd" (33: 8-9). In other words, Urizen's world becomes ordered in such a way that it is enclosed and cut off

from Enion's realm, elevated over and above it through the creation of a binary system, a "wondrous work flow[ing] forth like visible out of the invisible" (33: 10). Part of this process of separation, enclosure and elevation also includes the creation of the delineated human form "lest Man should fall into Eternal Death" (33: 12). Thus, the fall of Luvah into this maternal abyss is prevented by putting on the "robes of blood/ Lest the state called Luvah should cease" (33: 13-14). Also, the Mundane Shell makes use of its heavenly stars as a "*golden chain*/ To bind the Body of Man to heaven from falling into the Abyss" (33: 16-17; emphasis added).

From the above discussion, certain connections can be made between Nights II, IV and V. To begin, Albion's command to go forth and build a defensive bower of phallic power is repeated by Tharmas in Night IV but only completed by Los in Night V with the construction of Golgonooza. In all three nights what must ultimately be defended against is the threat posed by incest. Likewise, a crucial aspect of such a defense also entails the creation and protection of the body's clean and proper outline. Chain imagery and bondage thus become the mainstays in all three nights against preoedipal incest and the corporeal decomposition it produces. Through this imagery the thetic phase configurations of Nights IV and V are already implictly contained in Night II, yet this night elaborates upon the other two as component parts of the symbolic and its broader socio-political formations. Hence Night II's focus on sexual and political oppression as a feature of delineation, the human form, and the creation of binary systems. Throughout the following discussion on Night II, aspects of my previous analysis of Blake's aesthetics will reappear. Yet what was earlier the implicit Urizenic feature of Blake's aesthetic categories is now rendered explicit.

The Phallocentric Architecture of the Mundane Shell

Urizen's creation of the Mundane Shell begins much like Genesis, with a vatic act: "his voice went forth/ Luvah & Vala trembling & shrinking, beheld the great Work master/ And heard his Word!" (24: 4-6). Urizen's first utterance or speech act, "Divide ye bands influence by influence" (24: 6), brings about a universe which becomes hierarchically structured and divided into what is ultimately a binary male/female system. Psychoanalytically, this system is invested with symbolic repression and the marginalization of a maternal function on behalf of a paternalistic brotherhood which appears by Night IX. Urizen's creation can also be characterized, broadly, as logocentric since it not only proceeds through his voice but is also structured as a binary arrangement between superior and inferior aspects. His speech act is thus logocentric insofar as it divides chaos and draws a line between influences, beginning the creation of a world which will become progressively more geometrical, rigid and repressive.

Upon hearing the command of Urizen "The bands of Heaven flew thro the air singing & shouting to Urizen" (24: 9). As striated elements of chaos, the bands spontaneously divide and also sing and shout in ways which recall the feast motif alluded to above. As mentioned earlier, feast/feeding imagery in the poem is both coincident with musical imagery and is psychoanalytically very overdetermined. Accordingly, it can convey a sense in which the child incestuously feeds off of its mother, facilitating the discovery of fragmented, sexually charged body parts, or a sense in which the child feels itself to be castrated. In the first case, the child feeds off of and dismembers the mother while being dismembered itself through this incestuous contact. In the second case the child is dismembered or castrated by a phallic mother as an agent of the paternal function. Throughout the poem either one of these latent meanings may occur separately or together in condensed form with the other. Consequently, it is sometimes quite difficult to determine the

exact nature of the meaning we are dealing with in a given context in which the feast motif occurs. Even when the context seems to imply one kind of reading it is still possible that another is also included as a possible subversion of what appears to be the overall thrust. Nevertheless, in this instance, the overwhelmingly repressive nature of Night II's activity suggests castration as a reading of the musical imagery, especially since there does not appear to be any room for alternative or subversive possibilities.

Consequently the bands set about creating the instruments that will be used in fashioning the repressive Mundane Shell:

> Some fix'd the anvil, some the loom erected, some the plow
> And harrow formd & framd the harness of silver & ivory
> The golden compasses, the quadrant & the rule & balance
> They erected the furnaces, they formd the anvils of gold beaten in mills
> Where winter beats incessant, fixing them firm on their base. . . .
>
> (24: 10-14)

The imagery and diction employed in this passage reappear in Night VI where Urizen begins to fix his Sciences and operate his Vortexes in order to gain "a New Dominion over all his sons & Daughters" (73: 24). Not only are the Sciences "fixd" (73: 21) but Urizen will also "fix [his] foot" (73: 14), as if he were himself a compass designed to "measure out the immense & fix/ The whole into another world better suited to obey" (73: 17-18). Likewise, the silver and gold of the instruments in Night II also reappear in the "gold silver & iron/ And brass" (73: 16-17) used by Urizen in VI to create "vast instruments" (73: 17). Moreover, the "vast instruments" used by Urizen in VI to "measure out the immense" are probably the same "golden compasses . . . quadrant . . . rule & balance" which appear in II. Hence the textual interconnections between Nights II and VI bring out the restrictive and repressive function of these instruments, their obviously

repressive nature in VI being muted yet implied in II. One last feature of the construction going on in VI, which is also insinuated into II, is that Urizen wishes to create a place "where none should dare oppose his will himself being King/ Of All & [that] all futurity be bound in his *vast chain*" (73: 19-20; emphasis added). Once again the chain which functions so prominently in Nights IV and V is also implicitly contained in the building activity of Night II, reinforcing our reading of II as a manifestation of the social consequences of the symbolic order.

The chain's implicit presence in Night II is further underscored by another passage in which the "Lions of Urizen" (28: 25) forge pyramids on their anvils and throw them down "into the deeps of Non Entity" (28: 27) until they come to rest where "each his center finds" (28: 29). This center is also textually interconnected with the Center that the Chain of Jealousy manages to penetrate as it binds Orc with its living fibres. Although the chain rarely makes an appearance in II, it is this and other concealed references to it which make it crucial to a psychoanalytic reading of this night. Hence the chain's significance as a feature of the castration complex is also present, albeit concealed, in Night II.

Once Urizen's repressive instruments are formed, they are put to use by lions, leopards and tigers who will later be identified as his sons and who appear in ways already made familiar by our considerations of Blake's aesthetic theory:

> Sublime distinct their lineaments divine of human beauty
> The tygers of wrath called the horses of instruction from their mangers
> They unloos'd them & put on the harness of gold & silver & ivory
> In human forms distinct they stood round Urizen prince of Light
> Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand. . . .
>
> (25: 2-6)

Not only is the Mundane Shell initially formed by a speech act which divides and delineates but the construction crew also appears in forms which are clearly and

sharply delineated, enacting the inseparable connnection in Blake's aesthetics between the human form and a firm, bounding outline. Also, the use of the bounding outline, as instrument of division and hierarchy, resurfaces in Night II in much the same gender-specific way that it creates binaries in Blake's aesthetics. Thus, the "Sons of Urizen" (28: 31), as delineated agents of delineation, use their instruments to create a world "measured out in orderd spaces" (28: 31) with "compasses [that] divide the deep" (28: 32) and "strong scales" (28: 32) that "weigh the massy Cubes, then fix them in their awful stations" (29: 2). Both activities of dividing and weighing create oppositions, and in the case of the "strong scales," measure out the universe into ordered spaces which may be potentially unequal, some spaces, cubes, etc. being more or less weighty than others.

Not only do the Sons of Urizen divide the universe, they simultaneously produce a world in which those who are marginalized by the firm, bounding line are also females imprisoned by it. Hence the creation of Urizen's delineated/enclosed world also produces a specific kind of female slavery. It is the expropriated and exploited labour power of female slaves which Urizen and his Sons use to create the Mundane Shell:

> Then rose the Builders; First the Architect divine his plan
> Unfolds, The wondrous scaffold reard all round the infinite
> Quadrangular the building rose the heavens squared by a line.
> Trigon & cubes divide the elements in finite bonds
> Multitudes without number work incessant: the hewn stone
> Is placd in beds of mortar mingled with the ashes of Vala
> Severe the labour, female slaves the mortar trod oppressed. . . .
>
> (30: 8-14)

The extended metaphor of building, employed by Blake in this and other passages throughout Night II, utilizes a divison of labour in which men occupy all the senior and middle management positions, while women are commodified and exploited vehicles of surplus labour power. To begin, Urizen is the "Work master" (24: 5) or "Architect" who creates the blueprint from which there can be no deviation nor improvisation. Next, we have the dividing "Bands of Heaven" (24: 9) whose singing aligns them with the feast motif interpreted within this context as an image of castration and paternal function. These representatives of paternity function something like tool and die makers since they are responsible for the production of the means of production. They make the tools which Urizen's Sons later use. Next, we have Urizen's Sons who function a bit like skilled and privileged tradesmen or "Builders" who translate Urizen's blueprint into the actualities of construction. In all of thes' instances, men obviously have the better paid positions. At no point are they referred to as slaves nor do the contexts in which they appear ever contain pejorative connotations.

There is, however, one context in which Blake comes close to associating masculinity with enslaved labour. When describing the building of Ahania's Altar in Night II, the narrator tells us that it requires "terrible workmanship the Altar labour of ten thousand Slaves/ One thousand Men of wondrous power spent their lives in its formation" (30: 39-40). A superficial reading of these lines might lead one to conclude that the Men involved in the altar's construction are also slaves. Yet a closer examination of the textual evidence leads elsewhere. There is a syntactical opposition created between the "ten thousand Slaves" and "One thousand Men." Although no period appears after "Slaves," this often happens in *The Four Zoas* with Blake failing to punctuate what could or should be punctuated. The syntax of these lines is such that a period can be placed after "Slaves," (if one supplies a missing verb) producing a reading in which "ten

thousand Slaves" were required to build the Altar *as well as* "One thousand Men." Hence we get something like the following: "Of terrible workmanship the Altar [*was* the] labour of ten thousand Slaves[.]/ One thousand Men of wondrous power spent their lives in its formation." The labour power of the men is thus *in addition to* that performed by the Slaves, as part of a project in which Men and Slaves may work along side of each other while being differentiated from each other. Add to this the numerical differentiation between these groups and the positive nature of the prepositional clause modifying "Men" ("of wondrous power") in ways deemed inappropriate for slaves, and their distinctness becomes more likely.

If this reading is granted, all of the construction in Night II presupposes a distinction between men and women. Not only is the construction of Ahania's altar undertaken by men and (female) slaves but so too is Urizen's "Golden World" a manifestation of this division. As a "wondrous golden Building" it functions something like a prison, a gilded cage built by a construction crew for the express purpose of imprisoning the most exploited portion of that team:

> But infinitely beautiful the wondrous work arose
> In sorrow & care. a Golden World whose porches round the heavens
> And Pillard halls & rooms recievd the eternal wandering stars
> A wondrous golden Building; many a window many a door
> And many a divison let in & out into the vast unknown
> Cubed in window square immoveable, within its walls & cielings
> The heavens were closd and spirits mournd their bondage night and day. ...
>
> (32: 7-13)

Even though the above passage on the construction of the Mundane Shell does not specify who these "spi·its" are, another passage suggests that they are female. While these spirits "*mournd* their bondage *night and day*" we are also told that Vala can be seen "*mourning* among the Brick kilns compelld/ To labour *night &*

day among the fires" (31: 1-2; emphasis added). Vala's labour is a lamentation and a form of bondage in which she, like other female slaves, bakes the bricks and mixes the mortar. Her appeal to Urizen, on behalf of herself and her enslaved female companions, goes unanswered:

> O Lord wilt thou not look upon *our* sore afflictions
> Among these flames incessant labouring, *our* hard masters laugh
> At all our sorrow. *We* are made to turn the wheel for water
> To carry the heavy basket on our scorched shoulders, to sift
> The sand & ashes, & to mix the clay with tears & repentance
> . . . . . .
> The times are now returned upon *us*, *we* have given ourselves
> To scorn and now are scorned by the slaves of our enemies
> *Our beauty* is coverd over with clay & ashes, & *our* backs
> Furrowd with whips, & *our* flesh bruised with the heavy basket. . . .
>
> (31: 4-14)

Based on the textual evidence contained in Night II, Vala's use of personal pronouns refers to herself and the company of female slaves to which she belongs as they collectively sift the mortar of Urizen's repressive regime, compelled to build the walls of their own prison.

The Semiotic Furnace

The enslavement and marginalization of women, as represented by the repression of Vala, can be read psychoanalytically when viewed in the context of the Luvah/Vala episode of Night II. The destruction of Luvah in Urizen's furnaces consumes him in fires which Vala feeds "in cruel delight" (25: 41). Since Vala "incircle[s] round the furnaces where Luvah was clos'd" (26: 1) the reference to enclosure and confinement suggests that this manifestation of the feeding motif can

be read as a form of castration. Not only are the furnaces Urizen's, but they also anticipate Los's furnaces of Night IV, used to bind Urizen into shape with repressive and castrating chains. In one important sense, Luvah's consummation within the furnaces of Urizen is a form of castration, yet the imagery is overdetermined to such an extent that other more subversive features of the feast motif manage to surface. One such undercurrent concerns the feeding of these furnaces "with fire" (25: 41) linked to Orc's incestuous fires of Night V. Hence, what we are dealing with is an episode in which feeding is both incestuous and castrating, and as Brenda Webster has originally observed, simultaneously portrays "a mother drained by her infant and . . . a man drained by a woman's [castrating] sexual demands" (213).

On the one hand, Luvah is cast in the role of a mother who must act as a good breast, providing bountiful and unending supplies to Vala as insatiable infant with limitless needs for oral gratification. As "Earth-worm" (26: 7), Vala appears like the worm from *Thel* "an infant wrapped in the Lillys leaf" (4: 3) who is "helpless & naked" (4: 5). Accordingly, Luvah nurtures and feeds her "Day after day" (26: 10), providing her with "rains & dews" (26: 8) which are her only source of nourishment within a wilderness-like "dry & thirsty land" (26: 11). He alsc commands "springs to rise for her" (26: 12) and opens all of the maternal "floodgates of the heavens to quench her thirst" (26: 14). While being fed, Vala grows from "Earth-worm" (26: 7) to "Dragon" (26: 13), suggestively enlarging into tumescent genitals, making her not only an infant but a male child whose developing sexuality is anaclitically fed by the mother. Moreover, Vala's characterization as an "Earth-worm" also links her to Enion as "the hungry worm" (23: 17) at the beginning of Night II whose infantile, incestuous, phallic appetite must be defended against by Urizen's building. Yet when Vala becomes a "Dragon winged bright & poisonous" (26:13) she also, simultaneously, becomes a phallic

mother and castrating agent of the paternal function, while Luvah implicitly becomes an infant punished for his incestuous transgressions. This is borne out not only by Vala's enclosing of Luvah in Urizen's furnaces, but also by the accompanying illustrations to page 26 (Fig. 7) of the manuscript, one of which is a dragon with a dangerous and sharp-beaked phallus.

The conflicts present within the feeding motif of the Luvah/Vala episode repeat themselves in the hiding/searching dialectic of the passage which immediately follows it. Once again a full analysis of this dialectic must await a discussion of Night I. Yet some things may be said in the way of providing for a cursory reading of this passage. As Ault has observed, the processes of hiding and searching are inextricably linked and interconstitutional:

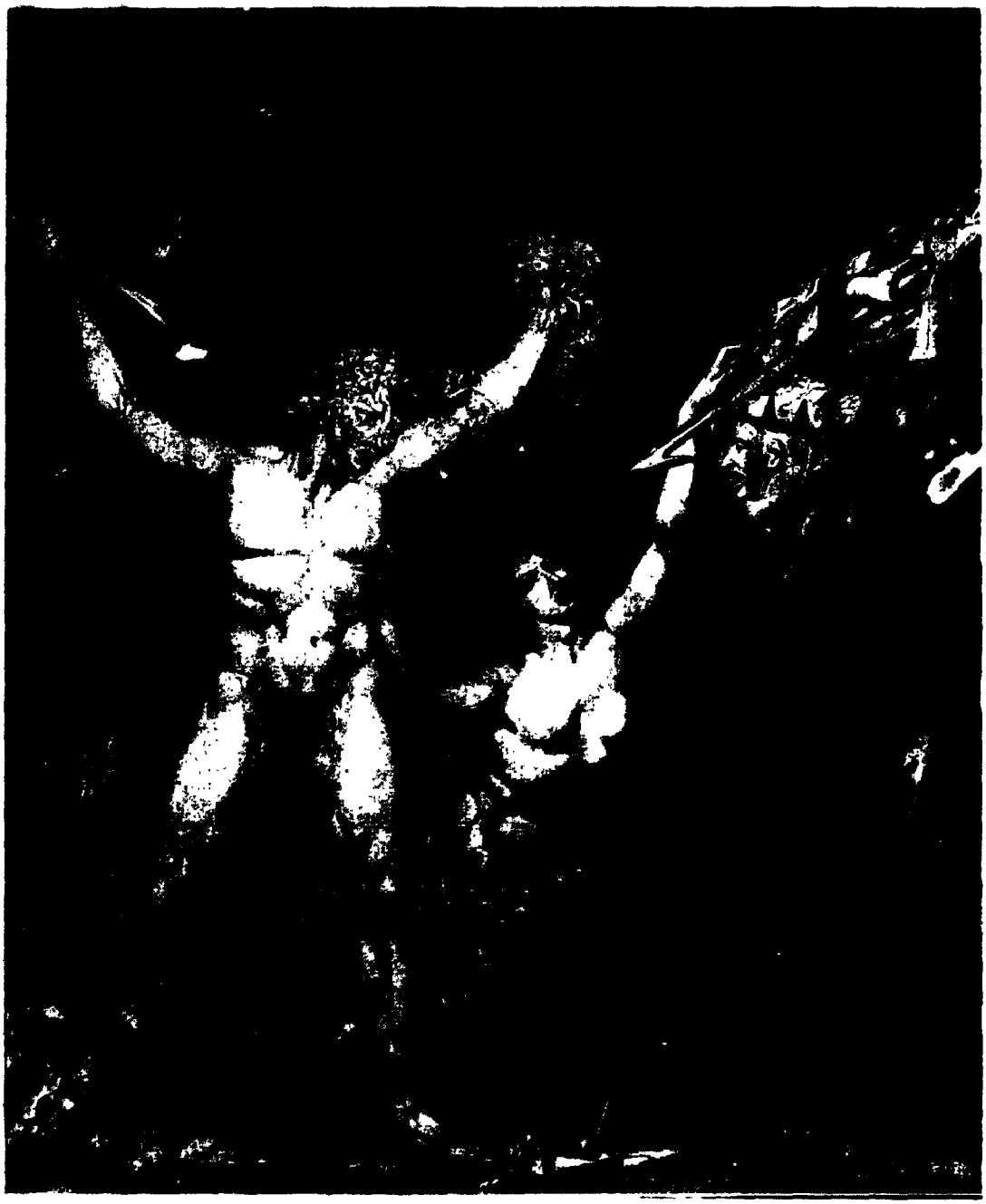
> hiding exists only by virtue of the fear of being examined, and examination exists only by virtue of the suspicion that something has been hidden. Secrecy . . . of separate, opaque identities whose interiors are hidden from external gaze, therefore becomes possible only within the circular interplay beween concealment and scrutinizing.
>
> (40)

The role played by eyesight and looking in this hiding/searching dialectic will be discussed in the context of Night I as a version of what Melanie Klein calls the epistemophilic instinct. As a kind of curiosity, epistemophilia wishes to penetrate the secrets of the primal scene and gain access to the perpetual intercourse into which mother and father are apparently locked. The exclusion of the child from this privileged sexual activity produces a jealous rage causing the child to phantasize about its own violent penetrations into the mother. Hence the curiosity and voyeurism of searching can become charged psychoanalytically as a kind of incestuous penetration of the mother. Yet this is only one way to understand voyeurism. As scoptophilia, voyeurism can manifest itself in a variety of ways and

is often connected to sadistic impulses which one either seeks to discharge or defend against. Looking at something (i.e. the penis) may be symptomatic of a desire to destroy it or to gain reassurance that the object is not yet destroyed (Fenichel 71). Thus, depending on who is doing the looking/searching, voyeurism may imply castration of the father *or* the son; it may defend against incest or promote incestuous penetration of the mother. Likewise, hiding may be a defense against either of these castrating glances as well as a possessive concealment, not only of the penis (father's or son's) but also that which it provides access to (mother/wife). Given these possibilities, the look can be interpreted in conflicting ways within the context of Oedipal strife.

Perhaps the best example of this can be found in Blake's art, with his illustration of the threatened combat between Satan and Death from Book II of *Paradise Lost* (Fig. 8). The context of this scene clearly foregrounds incest since the relationships between Satan and Sin, and Sin and Death, *are* incestuous. Also, Blake's depiction of the potential combat between Satan and Death places Sin between them, making it seem that father and son are about to come to blows over Sin as Satan's daughter/wife and Death's mother/wife. Although Milton's text does not describe their confrontation as a battle over sexual possession of Sin, Blake's illustration lends itself to this interpretation. Finally, Blake has both Satan and Death aim their phallic spears and *glances* at each other's genitals, making it clear that they are about to strike castrating blows. In this improvisation on Milton and depiction of Oedipal strife, Blake incorporates the look into their exchange in ways that are compatible with psychoanalytic interpretations of voyeurism. Although Diana Hume George is the first to call attention to the fact that "Blake's departure from Milton's text makes the sexual emphasis of the design unambiguous and obvious" she does not use it to support a

Figure No. 8. Satan, Sin and Death at the Gates of Hell. Taken from *William Blake Masterpieces: 1991*, Petaluma: Pomegranate, 1991.



reading of voyeurism or epistemophilia as it occurs elsewhere in Blake's written work (164).

Returning to the second version of the Luvah/Vala episode, we find Luvah commanding that the "Great deep . . . hide" Vala in his hand where she becomes "a little weeping Infant a span long" (27: 1-2). Here Vala's entire body measures out to the length of an erect penis which Luvah hides as a defensive measure against the implied threat of castration. As the passage progresses, it becomes apparent that Luvah protects Vala, and his own sexual virility, so that he can have intercourse with her "in soft gardens & in secret bowers of Summer" (27: 5) which are also woven "mazes of delight" (27: 6) and "Inextricable labyrinths" (27: 7). In hiding Vala, Luvah seeks to defend against a threat which is implicitly contained in his observation that he hides her in his bosom "as a man carries a lamb" (27: 3). The "labyrinths" and woven "mazes of delight" contain clues to the nature of this threat since they are connected with episodes in Night I, including the "Labyrinth" (4: 10) in which Tharmas proposes to hide Enion, and the "mazes of delight" (8: 21) woven by Los and Enitharmon to snare and "eat the flesh of Lambs" (8: 22). In hiding Vala within his bosom as a man would hide a lamb, Luvah alludes to these episodes as they foreground the oral incorporation of a maternal Enion by her children. Luvah's act thus becomes a version of the feast motif in which he incestuously consumes and protects the mother against possible repossession by the father. Yet Luvah's concealment of Vala within his "secret bowers" (27: 5) becomes the source of paternal retribution as their sexual union produces predatory "sons & daughters" (27: 7) who recapture Vala, concealing her from Luvah's epistemophilic vision. Although they are Luvah's offspring and suggest an incestuous appropriation of the mother, these children really represent a paternal agency. Hence they exact a Urizenic vengeance upon Luvah:

The hand of Urizen is upon me because I blotted out
That Human delusion to deliver all the sons of God
From bondage of the Human form. . . .

(27: 16-18)

That the Luvah/Vala episode in Night II is criss-crossed by conflicting readings marks it as the semiotic, especially when one considers that these conflicts are between incest and its prohibition. What is of particular interest is that this struggle becomes the raw material out of which Urizen's creative activity constructs the Mundane Shell. Once Luvah's meltdown is complete and Vala's fires have burnt theselves out, the furnaces are "unseald with spades & pickaxes" (28: 7) so that "Roaring let out the fluid, the molten metal ran in channels/ Cut by the plow of ages held in Urizens strong hand" (28: 8-9). By placing these fluid conflicts at the foundation of the Mundane Shell, Blake, on the one hand, anticipates Kristeva, locating the semiotic at the heart of any creative endeavour; and on the other, shows how the symbolic represses the semiotic while relying on it. In the language of classical psychoanalysis, the superego (as the model for the symbolic) borrows its energy and aggressiveness from the id (i.e. the semiotic) in order to censure and repress this agency of the unconscious.

Blake represents this Urizenic hypocrisy through the imagery of plowing. While Urizen needs this molten metal of sexual conflict to run in his plowed channels, Vala cries out that the backs of female slaves have been "Furrowd with whips" (31: 14). Vala's contribution to creating the Mundane Shell has been profound, both as female slave labour and the raw material of sexual conflict. Yet the raw material her burning fires provide is marked by a sadistic incestuous component as part of its conflicted structure. Hence Urizen must simultaneously rely on this semiotic undercurrent while rigorously repressing it. This is why Urizen's furrows both rely on material provided by the "fires of Vala" (28: 4) and

scar her back with the marks of repression. From what has been said, the relationship between Urizen and Vala, or females in general, is that between master and slave. While relying heavily on female slavery (and the semiotic) Urizen, as master, must also repress an awareness of this reliance by marginalizing and oppressing them. Accordingly, the crucial role that women play in creating the Mundane Shell can never be acknowledged since this would undermine Urizenic and paternalistic hegemony. The prohibitive father would have to acknowledge his indebtedness to the permissive mother.

The Iron Curtain

Before leaving Night II some time should be spent on the motif of weaving which occurs there as a partial repetition of Enion's weaving in Night I. While Enion's weaving is primarily part of a conflictual dynamic, the weaving performed in Night II anticipates the enclosure and confinement of Urizen's "nerves of joy" in Night IV as a form of sexual restriction. The prohibitive nature of this weaving announces itself when we are told that "in Caverns *shut*, the golden Looms erected/ First spun, then wove the Atmospheres (29: 3-4; empahsis added). That this weaving is already performed within a cavernous enclosure is a sign that it will likely reinforce this sense of confinement. Also, the weaving is accomplished by a "wingd shuttle piping shrill thro' all the list'ning threads" (29: 5), a reference to the music/feast motif which, in this case, is bound up in a context of castration as opposed to its conflicted representations in Night V.

Once this atmospheric tapestry of oppression is woven, "strong wing'd Eagles" (29: 8) appear as transformations of the "wingd shuttle" and decorate the universe with this ironically bright fabric, "enlighten[ing] the dark deep" (29: 14) with a closed and bounding envelope:

Their venturous flight, in Human forms distinct; thro darkness deep
They bear the woven draperies; on golden hooks they hang abroad
The universal curtains & spread out from Sun to Sun
The vehicles of light, they separate the furious particles
Into mild currents as the water mingles with the wine.

(29: 9-13)

Once again the very agents of confinement and enclosure appear to us in delineated forms reinforcing the repressive agenda of Blake's firm, bounding outline and Human Form Divine presupposed by his aesthetic theory. As well, these curtains not only suffocate the universe but continue the process of separation and marginalization carried on elsewhere in Night II. In spite of the overall positive gist of the diction employed in this passage, the activity described is unremittingly nefarious and dark.

As if to make this agenda explicit, and underscore its totalitarian nature, the cosmically repressive draperies are suddenly transformed into vast nets, an image communicating their real purpose and intent:

While thus the Spirits of strongest wing enlighten the dark deep
The threads are spun & the cords twisted & drawn out; then the weak
Begin their work; & many a net is netted; many a net
Spread & many a Spirit caught, innumerable the nets
Innumerable the gins & traps; & many a soothing flute
Is form'd & many a corded lyre, outspread over the immense
In cruel delight they trap the listeners, & in cruel delight
Bind them, condensing the strong energies into little compass. . . .

(29: 14 - 30:5)

The nets are used to catch, bind and entrap, and in doing so, become identified with musical instruments, the twisted "cords" of the nets becoming simultaneously

the strings of a "corded lyre." The repressive nature of the "wingd shuttle['s]" musical feast is now explicit and unmistakeable as the lyre uses its own shuttle of strings to net, entrap and bind its listeners, circumscribing and shrinking their "energies" in ways that recall the shrinking of Urizen's own sexuality in Night IV. Consequently the musical/feast imagery of these passages is associated with a castrating dismemberment. Moreover, the "condensing [of] strong energies into little compass" alludes to the repression inherent in Urizen's geometrical architecture since "compass" both describes the suffocating limits of restriction and the geometrical instrument which designs those limits. It is through this kind of geometry that a universe is created "Subordinate to Urizen" (33: 20) and whose planets are compelled "along their ordered ways/ In right lined paths" (33: 22-23), each one following its own "hard subdued course in the vast deep" (33: 36).

Enion's Lament

Finally a discussion of Night II's significance, as a Urizenic manifesto of the symbolic order, would be incomplete if we did not include the social consequences stemming from that order. Our account, so far, has included a review of Night II's imagery and architecture of repression. It has discussed the binding and delineating function of Urizen's geometrical constructions and their stratification of the universe into a male/female binary system, explaining these moves psychoanalytically as motivated by the repression of the maternal function's incestuous dynamic. We have also traced Urizen's repressive use of the bounding line to similar considerations raised in previous discussions on Blake's aesthetic theory. Finally, we have pursued some of the interconnections between Night II and other nights, based on the reappearance of certain motifs surfacing at various places throughout the entire poem. In all of this, the main consideration has been to show how Urizen's Mundane Shell is an order founded upon the repression of

incest, much as the symbolic order articulates a culture upon exactly the same repression. Yet it is only with Enion's lament at the end of Night II that this comparison of the Mundane Shell and the symbolic solidifies itself socially. In keeping with Kristeva's analysis of the symbolic, the Mundane Shell must also exhibit the symptoms of a totalitarian social organization grounded on sexual repression. Now this requirement has been partially met by the enslavement of women which may signify a social condition while metaphorically communicating the binary structure of society as a whole, as well as the repression of the maternal function which grounds this structure. Yet it is only Enion's lament which brings the social consequences of the Mundane Shell's construction completely to the fore.

Enion's lament is orchestrated by the reappearance of the feast motif which is now largely transcribed onto an explicitly social register, even though it still contains undercurrents associated with castration and the father's hegemony. For the most part, Enion's lament describes a social condition of exploitation in which some sectors of society benefit at the expense of others. Quite literally, some are capable of eating or feasting only because others are made to starve. While the sexual subtext of this lament describes the father's privileges over the son, in relation to the mother, it dwells primarily on the level of the social dynamics made possible by this psychological arrangement. Hence, Enion begins her lament by announcing that she is "made to sow the thistle for wheat; [and] the nettle for a nourishing dainty" (35: 1), describing a condition of famine and social impoverishment which makes some treat weeds as if they were the bread of life. Accordingly, there are those who "beg from door to door" (35: 6) and "the witherd field where the farmer plows for bread in vain" (35: 15). This food imagery continues as Enion elaborates on these conditions of scarcity and the fact that there are those who are exempt from them. More to the point, this opposition is the end result of a social struggle since the ones who eat are also those who

"*triumph* in the summers sun" (35: 16; emphasis added). Thus they triumph "in the vintage & . . . sing on the wagon loaded with corn" (35: 17) while others are "afflicted" (35: 18), "houseless" (35: 19) and "hungry" (36: 1). This conflict, inherent in social conditions, becomes more pronounced when the privileged who enjoy "olive & vine" (36: 8), and whose children bring "fruit & flowers" (36: 8), also "hear sounds of love in the thunder storm that destroys [their] enemies house" (36: 6). Hence they "rejoice in the blight that covers his field, & the sickness that cuts off his children" (36: 7).

Enion finishes off with a coda that leaves little doubt about the class distinctions she names, and the suffering caused by the exploitation which the exploiter all too easily forgets:

> Then the groan & the dolor are quite forgotten & the slave grinding at
> the mill
> And the captive in chains & the poor in the prison & the soldier in
> the field
> When the shatterd bone hath laid him groaning among the happier dead
> It is an easy thing to rejoice in the tents of prosperity
> Thus could I sing & thus rejoice, but it is not so with me!
>
> (36: 9-13)

Enion's lament indicts Urizen's creation of the Mundane Shell by listing the social crimes constituting part of its architecture. As a symbolic order it is guilty of the mass production of a slavery and scarcity reflecting real social conditions while also acting as metaphors for the psychological dynamics of repression interconstitutional with them. Enion instructs us in the ways of psychic and social oppression, recalling what Frye observes as Blake's "terrible indictment . . . in the *Songs of Experience*" (*Symmetry* 236). The tone of "[c]ontempt and horror" heard in Experience reappears in the way Enion articulates her own lesson (*Symmetry* 236):

What is the price of Experience do men buy it for a song
Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath his house his wife his children. . . .

(35: 11-13)

Enion compares the Mundane Shell to the condition of Experience and the loss that must be suffered while existing in it. Such a world is a hard school exacting a fierce tuition from those who are enrolled in it. Like Enion, they are reduced to an abject state. Cut off from all community, these victims are implicitly homeless wanderers whose peripheral existence doubles as a form of excess or waste. Their abjection, as we have also learned from Bataille and Kristeva, is the consequence of a combined psycho-social totalitarianism.

Night I: The Dialectic Of Dismemberment

The Paranoid-Schizoid Position and The Semiotic

The foregoing of *The Four Zoas* interprets Nights II, IV and V collectively as configurations describing thetic phase developments, including the mirror stage, the castration complex, Oedipal strife, the creation of the symbolic order and the social consequences attendant upon it. In the next phase of analysis, Night I will be read as a complex configuration of what the thetic phase attempts to repress and marginalize. An understanding of Night I, in the context of the psychoanalytic reading advanced in this study, presupposes a familiarity with Melanie Klein's theories on the primitive stages of infantile sexual development experienced during the first three or four months of life. Specifically, her thoughts on such primitive defense mechanisms as splitting, introjection and projection as they occur within what she calls the paranoid-schizoid position, must be considered. The introduction of Klein does not deviate from the theoretical

context so far constructed around the work of Julia Kristeva. Instead it elaborates and extends that context in ways suggested by Kristeva herself.

In a note from *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva points to the connection between her own concept of the semiotic and the preoedipal, sadistic forces examined by Klein:

> Throughout her writings, Melanie Klein emphasizes the "pre-Oedipal" phase, i.e., a period of the subject's development that precedes the "discovery" of castration and the positing of the superego, which itself is subject to (paternal) Law. The processes she describes for this phase correspond, *but on a genetic level*, to what we call the semiotic. Significantly these pre-Oedipal processes are organized through projection onto the mother's body, for girls as well as for boys. . . .
>
> (241)

What Kristeva apparently means is that there is a correspondence between the anal sadism of the semiotic, specifically characterized by the rejection of feces, and the projection of excrement as a defensive gesture within the paranoid-schizoid position. Once this connection is explored, a new appreciation for the feast imagery and its implied dismemberments within *The Four Zoas* will suggest itself. The excessive violence of the poem's imagery, and especially of Night I, will then become better understood as the surfacing, within language, of this sadism against which the poem defends itself in Nights II, IV and V.

From a very early stage the child is beset by anxieties revolving around the fear of its own annihilation which can be attributed to the workings of the death instinct at the outset of life. Originating with primal aggressive and sadistic tendencies, these anxieties result from the threat of fragmentation or disintegration produced as an active process of the ego upon itself. Klein agrees with "Winnicott's emphasis on the unintegration of the early ego" and the belief "that

the early ego largely lacks cohesion," displaying a "tendency towards disintegration [and] a falling into bits" (*Envy* 4). The child experiences this threat as originating within itself and interprets this internal threat, through fantasy, as the presence of a persecuting object which can potentially explode the ego and shatter it. Klein states that "under the pressure of this threat the ego tends to fall to pieces" (*Envy* 5). Left to itself, the ego's own death instinct can potentially become extremely self-destructive. It is at this point that the child enlists the aid of a series of projections which externalize this threat as part of a defense against it. Incorporated within these defensive mechanisms is the phenomenon of epistemophilia and its relationship to the primal scene. Having said this, it is important to note that a significant feature of Klein's thought includes the way she collapses orthodox Freudian phases of development into one interdependent dynamic. Accordingly, the oral, anal and genital or Oedipal phases are often intermingled in her analyses.

Initially, early childhood aggression attaches itself to a powerful and primal curiosity called the epistemophilic component which is "equivalent to Freud's voyeurism" (Hinshelwood 48). It is basically a curiosity about the primal scene, the parents' sexuality and their sexual organs inextricably enmeshed and intertwined in a condition of perpetual coitus known as the combined parent. As the earliest and most primitive fantasy of the Oedipal situation, this sexual union of the two parents sees them as mutually cruel and deadly, incorporating and cannibalizing each other's sexual organs and body parts during sex. Strictly speaking, this violence is a projection of the child's own death instinct as a defensive gesture, interpreted as rage at being excluded from the primal scene. The child's own fantasy, however, transforms the teeth, nails, genitals and excrements of the parents into instruments of mutual destruction with which they torment and destroy each other in the act of copulation. Although the combined

parent figure is most often associated with the phallic mother, who contains the father (and more pointedly, the father's penis) inside her, it can also become a fantasy of their mutual castration and cannibalizing dismemberment. The mother not only bites or tears off the father's penis, consuming it inside her, but the father also simultaneously performs similar operations upon her breasts and nipples. In this manner, epistemophilia contributes to a defense against the child's anxiety over internal persecution and fragmentation, projecting its own sadism upon the primal scene, deflecting aggressive tendencies by making them primarily reflecting characteristics of the mother and the mother's breast. This makes possible further outward projections of sadism in the form of the child's own oral aggressions against the combined parent figure. Hence the child's fantasy of the combined parent figure and the child's attack upon this figure (both of which are directed at the mother's breast), become joint forms of defense against the threat of self-annihilation.

As mentioned, the child experiences an extreme rage at being excluded from this catastrophic primal scene. The frustration experienced by the child, at being thus separated and excluded, charges his epistemophilic curiosity with a sadistic rage, causing him to fantasize his own violent penetration of the mother's body in order to take possession of it, destroy the objects belonging to the father within her, and to exact a measure of vengeance upon both of them:

> The early connection between the epistemophilic impulse and sadism is very important for the whole mental development. This instinct, activated by the rise of the Oedipus tendencies, at first mainly concerns itself with the mother's body, which is assumed to be the scene of all sexual processes and developments. The child is still dominated by the anal-sadistic libido-position which impels him to wish to appropriate the contents of the body. He thus begins to be curious about what it contains . . . So the

> epistemophilic instinct and the desire to take possession come quite early to be most intimately connected with one another. . . .
>
> (Klein, *Envy* 188)

The child's fantasy attack against the mother's breast incorporates it cannibalistically in bits and fragments. Although "oral libido still has the lead" in these attacks upon the mother there is also a "confluence of oral, urethral and anal desires, both libidinal and aggressive" (Klein, *Envy* 7-8). Moreover, the combined sadistic forces of this oral-anal constellation expand their attack to include the entire body of the mother which they either suck dry, bite up, scoop out and rob, or penetrate with dangerous urethral and excremental substances.

Now these harmful excremental substances, expelled into the mother, are considered by the child to be "bad parts of the self" (Klein, *Envy* 8). In other words, excrement is made to represent those hostile and sadistic forces or internal objects which originally threatened the ego with annihilation. Hence their projection into the mother not only takes incestuous possession of her but also defends against these bad objects by expelling them. As Klein's theory develops, this primary and primitive internal persecutor becomes the germ of a superego which stalks the psyche right at birth since "important sources of primary anxiety are the trauma of birth . . . [experienced] as being caused by objects" inside the child (Klein, *Envy* 5). This ur-fantasy of an internal persecutor is not only the child's interpretation of its own death instinct, but is also the skeletal structure of its superego.

It is at this point in her theory that Klein introduces us to a vicious circle having horrific consequences for the fantasy life of the child. The projection of excremental bad parts of the self (parts that persecute the self--aspects of the ego's own self-persecution) into the mother creates an identity between the bad self and the mother/combined parent figure who is now experienced as a persecutor in her

own right. As a result, the defensive gestures performed by the ego reintroduce the very same threats against which it originally hoped to defend itself. This comes about in several ways. In the case of excremental penetration of the maternal object, "the impulses to control an object from within it stir up the fear of being controlled and persecuted inside it" (Klein, *Envy* 11). Although excremental projection externalizes the original threat, penetration of the mother reactivates the threat since the child now fears being torn to pieces while inside. Also, the child's epistemophilic attack upon the mother involves the introjection and incorporation of her body, which has already become identified as a bad, persecuting object due to the excremental occupation and possession of it. Thus by "introjecting and re-introjecting the forcefully entered object, the subject's feelings of inner persecution are strongly reinforced" since the mother becomes a retaliatory agent capable of fragmenting the child from within (Klein, *Envy* 11). Finally, by discharging bad parts of itself in its excremental attacks against the other, the self also actively splits off pieces of itself and consequently brings about the disintegration it so strenuously seeks to avoid. In all of these cases, the child feels the need for redoubled defensive acts either of active splitting, aggressive penetration or orally aggressive incorporation. The result is a dialectic of dismemberment in which s/he and her antagonist are caught up in an escalating spiral of mutual evisceration.

Once this cycle is set in motion, the original skeletal nature of the superego, as internal persecutor, becomes fleshed out in greater detail. This happens when the mother or combined parent figure becomes identified as bad external object or persecutor and then becomes orally introjected "reinforc[ing] the fear of the destructive impulse within" (Klein, *Envy* 5). By using the term "reinforce" Klein implies that the internal persecutor is already there even though its nature, character and identity will become more specific with subsequent introjections.

Thus when Klein informs us that the "internalization of a devoured and therefore devouring, breast create[s] the prototype of all internal persecutors," it is important to remember that this devouring already presupposes the presence of an internal persecutor (*Selected* 50). The defensive mechanisms described by Klein always start from the child's experience of internal persecution which becomes progressively more concrete, and which results in a full-fledged superego, as parent figures subsequently become introjected and incorporated. Properly and strictly speaking, the superego comes into its own once the combined parent figure has been attacked and consumed by the child. Yet this oral/anal sadistic attack and incorporation already presupposes the presence of an internal persecutor who must be defensively projected outwards.

The theories of Klein and Kristeva most obviously meet on the basis of what they have to say about excremental projection or anal sadistic pleasure. In this respect the most important comparison is the one which Kristeva herself makes between the semiotic and the paranoid-schizoid position. Although she does not make a detailed analysis, I believe that her brief comment can serve as a point of departure for our own investigations into the relationship between these two seminal psychoanalytic theorists.

Recalling Kristeva's analysis of the semiotic, it is important to remember how its anal sadistic pleasure is regulated by the hygenic policing activity of the mother who safeguards the topography of the clean and proper body. Although these anal drives are, technically speaking, preoedipal, the symbolic still exerts a regulatory pressure on them through the agency of the mother, contributing to the semiotic's rhythmical oscillations between drive and stasis. The semiotic is consequently already conflicted in ways which will become more pronounced when it surfaces as part of the signifying process. In this case, the incestuous oralization of anal rejection or anal sadistic pleasure, vis-à-vis the mother's breast, will surface

in the orality of poetic language as a conflict between symbolic restraint and sadistic pulverization already latent within the semiotic itself. Moreover, these conflicts surrounding anality also reappear in the notion of abjection. With the abject, excrement becomes overdetermined as a form of incestuous nourishment simultaneously desired by the "subject" and repulsed under pressure of the symbolic.

Kristeva's theoretical formations, consequently, all focus on the tenacity of incestuous, anal sadistic drive motility and its ongoing conflict with the symbolic. Similarly, the excremental discharges and projections analyzed by Klein are not only representations of an internal persecutor (i.e. superego) but are also the means through which the child overcomes his separation from the mother and gains incestuous access to her. While functioning as a bad part of the ego which must be defensively split off, excrement simultaneously breaks into the mother and takes possession of her. Also, excremental penetration of the mother coincides with oral introjection of her, while simultaneously identifying her as a bad, persecuting object. Accordingly, as soon as the child takes possession of her, he also introjects the mother as internal persecutor. In both of these scenarios, excrement becomes the focal point of a conflict between incest and the superego, much as it does for Kristeva in the semiotic. In this sense, Kristeva's work is indebted to Klein's just as much as it is to the work of others such as Bataille whose influence adds a political dimension to the psychic conflicts identified by her.

In what follows, the theoretical similarities between Klein and Kristeva will be used to investigate the feast motif of Night I, and its connections to the weaving motif, since both are described as processes in which one is *drawn out* or emptied of nourishing substance much as one would be *drawn out* or unravelled on a loom. The sadistic and cannibalistic nature of these processes in Night I,

together with the epistemophilic voyeurism of the hiding/searching sequence between Tharmas and Enion, and their mutual dismemberments, all contribute to a theory of interpretation casting Night I as a fantasy reenactment of the paranoid-schizoid position. Also, while presenting itself as such a fantasy, Night I is simultaneously a configuration of sadistic qualities inherent in the semiotic, even though its anal-sadistic drive motility surfaces in the feast motif in an oral sadistic guise. As both Klein and Kristeva observe, there is a confluence between these sadistic drives so that the energy of one is shot through with the significance of the other. Consequently *The Four Zoas* begins with a highly disturbing and anxiety-producing fantasy which is frantically and strenuously defended against in Nights II, IV and V.

Finally, one last note on the connection between anaclisis and the paranoid-schizoid position. Orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis explains the child's experience of fragmentation as a by-product of orality, since the autoerotic discovery of erogenous zones and body parts is a consequence, primarily of feeding, but also of having other survival needs met by the mother. In spite of this connection between orality and fragmentation, orthodox Freudian theories cannot capture the horror which the child apparently feels and which *The Four Zoas* obviously exhibits. Yet the poem provides imagery consistent with both Freud and Klein, hence the feeding and sexual gratification of Orc's limbs in Night V, and the horrific dismemberments of Night I. It is in cases like these that poetry appears to go beyond what theory provides in the way of an interpretive context. While Klein gives us the horror of fragmentation without any real emphasis on pleasure, and Freud gives us pleasurable fragmentation without an increase in anxiety, it is Blake who, in different places, gives us both. Consequently, I will sometimes find it necessary to shift gears, keeping in mind all the while that what

Freud and Klein separately describe, as differing interpretations of preoedipal sexuality, are for Blake aspects of one and the same intrapsychic terrain.

Problematic Aspects of the Semiotic

It could be argued that an understanding of Kristeva's semiotic is warped by interpreting it as a dynamic caught up in incest and its repercussions. When Freud discusses incest in *Totem and Taboo* he describes a process in which the primal horde of brothers comes together in order to wrench "'both wife and life from the paternal tyrant'" (142). By murdering the father each one wishes "like the father, to have all the women to himself" (144). This analysis of incest is quite disturbing from a feminist perspective since a form of phallocentrism reinscribes itself in spite of the father's murder. Women are still seen as property of which the sons take possession while usurping the paternal position. The foregoing discussion on Klein's theory of paranoid-schizoid mechanisms partially assumes this phallocentric revival since the child always seeks to possess the mother's body. Even though Kristeva clearly stipulates that paranoid-schizoid projection is undertaken by both boys and girls, the qualification that girls also participate in this appropriation of the maternal body may not meliorate its dominant phallocentric tone. The fact that a woman's body is being possessed may take precedence over every other mitigating factor.

Even though incest, thus understood, may be problematic for a feminist psychoanalysis seeking to subvert the symbolic, its prevalence in this study does not fundamentally distort Kristeva's understanding of the semiotic. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* Kristeva argues that the incest practiced by the primal horde is "inseparable" from the "music, rhythm [and] prosody" of semiotic eruptions (153). Kristeva observes that the anal-sadistic jouissance and shattering which characterize the semiotic can be affirmed without succumbing to "paranoid

paternal unity" (152). One method is through the oralization of rejection, discussed in chapter one, as that which mediates a "non-sublimated anality" by introducing it into the "linear language" of the symbolic "characterized by the subject/predicate sequences of its syntagms" (152, 154). This anality is initially described in terms recalling Klein's paranoid-schizoid position as a discharge "simultaneously felt as an attack against the expelled object, all exterior objects (including father and mother), and the body itself" (151). Moreover, the displacement of this anal-sadistic jouissance through oralization is also described in terms reminiscent of Klein's analysis as a "reunion with the mother's body" and a "devouring fusion" (153). Anal rejection and its oralization are thus ways in which the child possesses the mother's body and, when introduced into the "signifying chain," constitute "semiotic devices which run through . . . phenotexts" (152):

> Suction or expulsion, fusion with or rejection of the mother's breast seem to be at the root of this erotization of the vocal apparatus and, through it, the introduction into the linguistic order of an excess of pleasure marked by a redistribution of the phonematic order.
>
> (154)

Even though there appears to be an opposition here between fusion and rejection, one must remember that rejection surfaces in oralization *as* fusion with the mother and appears to presuppose the Kleinean notion of an anal projection of feces which attacks and possesses the mother's body.

That rejection/oralization recalls the masculinist possession of the mother's body is confirmed when Kristeva likens it to "the Oedipus complex of a far-off incest" (153). This observation also introduces us to the second way in which rejection survives the suppressions of "paranoid paternal unity" (152). Hence this

> second modality, always inseparable from the first, appears in the reunion with brothers' bodies, in the reconstitution of a *homosexual phratry* that

> will forever pursue, tirelessly and interminably, the murder of the One, the Father, in order to impose *one* logic, *one* ethics, *one* signified, but *other*, critical, combatant, revolutionary–the brothers in Freud's primal horde. . . .
>
> (153)

Kristeva appears to recognize the possibility of a contradiction when she remarks that the subversion of paternal unity or oneness reintroduces another kind of totalitarian solidarity. Yet she also stipulates that this tribal oneness differs by somehow remaining revolutionary in its psycho-sexual program. Freud's primal horde thus constitutes a kind of psychoanalytic dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently the semiotic appears to be inescapably linked to possession of the mother's body in ways which imply a masculine supremacy. To use Klein's notion of the paranoid-schizoid position as a way of understanding the semiotic is thus not a phallic warping of Kristeva's thought but instead serves to underline a profoundly problematic aspect of it. For the present, we can only acknowledge this problem in our use of Kristevan concepts since space does not permit a deeper exploration of its reverberations throughout her work. Finally the revolutionary implications of Kristeva's homosexual phratry, as a vehicle for the semiotic, gives us another perspective on the self-subversion of the brotherhood achieved by the Zoas at the end of *The Four Zoas*. Even though their reunion signifies the solidification of a patriarchal, symbolic hierarchy it simultaneously reintroduces the semiotic as a destabilizing influence at its center. We shall see how this destabilization works when we come to Vala's Garden Scene in Night IX.

Tharmas and Enion: The Initial Conflict

As a condensation of oral sadistic aggression and its prohibition, Night I begins as a fantasy of Oedipal strife in which Tharmas starts out as a father

defending against the primal horde. In saying this I am taking my lead from Ault who remarks that in "the first eight lines of the poem proper, the narrative voice divides into a sequential dialogue or dialectic whose physical, spatial layout on the page possesses significance in itself" (12). The first eight lines of the poem are as follows:

> The Song of the Aged *Mother* which shook the heavens with wrath
> Hearing the march of long resounding strong heroic Verse
> Marshalld in order for the day of Intellectual Battle
> Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity
> Cannot Exist. but from the Universal *Brotherhood* of Eden
> The Universal Man. To Whom be Glory Evermore Amen
> [What] are the Natures of those Living Creatures the Heavenly *Father* only
> [Knowth]. . . .
>
> (3: 1-8; emphasis added)

The first three lines focus on the "Song of the Aged Mother" (3: 1); the next three emphasize the "Universal Brotherhood" (3: 5); and the last two lines of this sequence give rise to the "Heavenly Father" (3: 7) (Ault 12). In questioning the significance of placing the Brotherhood spatially between the Aged Mother and the Father, Ault suggests a scenario reading these arrangements in terms of a seizure of power in which the Mother is displaced by the Father through the agency of their sons. One can instead, read this narrative sequence psychoanalytically as depicting the subversion of the Father's power by the sons who simultaneously take possession of the mother.

As a spatial synopsis of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, these arrangements succinctly declare that the sons *come between* their parents, both sexually and concretely on the page. In part, this reading is justified by the narrative events of Night V, describing the threat of a similar subversion. Yet it is also reinforced by

some of the textual evidence immediately following this opening sequence. Tharmas is introduced as "Parent power. darkning in the West" (4: 6), and in this sense, becomes the father whose sexual power is in decline. Another parent in Blake's oeuvre, also associated with the west, is Tiriel, who is twice described as "king . . . of the west" (*T* 2: 17,19). Like Tharmas, he is also "darkling oer the mountains" (*T* 1: 51) and is in decline, choosing to accept self-exile as an outcast rather than live with his rebellious offspring. More specifically, the nature of their rebellion is sexual since they have been "feasting upon . . . aged parents flesh" (*T* 1: 22), "Nourished with milk [and] . . . with mothers tears & cares" (*T* 1: 26).

These intertextual resonances between *The Four Zoas* and *Tiriel* reinforce the sense in which Tharmas is a father whose decline is a specifically sexual one, given the possibility that the brotherhood of his sons is incestuously cannibalizing their mother. Furthermore, this brotherhood or primal horde is also alluded to as "those Living Creatures" (3: 7) by the narrator. Hence, when Tharmas cries out to Enion that they have "become a Victim to the Living" (4: 8), this sense of victimization becomes, in this context, an offshoot of Oedipal conflict. Accordingly, when Tharmas announces to Enion that they "hide in secret" (4: 8), the implication is that they are both hiding from the epistemophilic glances of the brotherhood which seek to castrate him and take possession of her.

Yet in the complex, overdetermined lines which follow, Tharmas partially maintains his status of victimized father, but more and more also becomes a configuration of the persecuted infant. Similarly Enion changes from being Tharmas's hidden and protected wife, to a persecuting phallic mother retaliating against the incestuous drives now embodied by Tharmas. By having these characters go through such a transformation, the text displays the workings of the semiotic insofar as preoedipal sexuality (oral sadistic and incestuous) is both permitted and prohibited, producing the following conflicted text:

Lost! Lost! Lost! are my Emanations Enion O Enion
We are become a Victim to the Living We hide in secret
I have hidden Jerusalem in Silent Contrition O Pity Me
I will build thee a Labyrinth also O pity me O Enion
Why hast thou taken sweet Jerusalem from my inmost Soul
Let her Lay secret in the Soft recess of darkness & silence
It is not Love I bear to [Jerusalem] It is Pity
She hath taken refuge in my bosom & I cannot cast her out.

(4: 7-14)

Although Tharmas laments the loss of his Emanations as a consequence of victimization and Oedipal strife, the struggle appears to be somewhat inconclusive due to the fact that he is still in a position to hide and protect them. The *absence of punctuation* from this passage makes it seem that Enion is both the name given to the aggregate Emanations, and the person(s) to whom Tharmas laments. Moreover, the context is also left unclear as to whether or not Tharmas complains to Enion about a condition which they suffer from together, or complains to Enion about a situation to which she subjects him. On the one hand the word "Enion" may name his lost Emanations. On the other hand it may also name that which brings about this loss. Hence when Tharmas declares that "*We* are become a Victim" (4: 8; emphasis added), this use of the first person plural pronoun seems to refer to Enion and himself. At this point, given the foregoing analysis of the poem's opening, Tharmas and Enion are the ones who are set upon by the "Living" as primal horde or "Brotherhood," and who must consequently hide from their castrating glance. Yet, in the very next line, we discover that it is Jerusalem who is "hidden" (4: 9) and that Tharmas's offer *also* to build a "Labyrinth" (4: 10) for Enion suggests that Jerusalem is already sequestered in such a maze. Suddenly it is Tharmas and Jerusalem who must "hide in secret" (4: 8), confusing the issue as

to whether or not the name of Enion or Jerusalem applies to "Emanations." More to the point, it is now Tharmas and Jerusalem who must hide from the searching gaze of *Enion* who has "taken sweet Jerusalem from [his] inmost Soul" (4: 11) and will not "Let her lay secret in the Soft recess of darkness and silence" (4: 12).

An understanding of this shift hinges on how we understand Blake's use of the labyrinth as an image in this passage. A clue is provided by the fact that Tharmas has given "refuge" to Jerusalem in his bosom and "cannot cast her out" (4: 14). Recalling Blake's insistence that Venetian and Flemish artists should be *cast out* as practitioners of excrementitious art, it seems possible, in this context, to suggest that Jerusalem is, among other things, a retained and precious excremental commodity. Underscoring this interpretation is the possibility that the "Labyrinth" Tharmas speaks of as his "inmost Soul" and "Soft recess of darkness & silence" may represent an intestinal enclosure. Psychoanalytically, Jerusalem now becomes a name given to fragments of the mother's body sadistically incorporated by Tharmas as infant.

Also, Tharmas claims that his concealment of Jerusalem is an act of "Pity" (4: 13), reminding us that for Blake, "Pity would be no more,/ If we did not make somebody Poor" (*SE* 27). Accordingly, those who have been impoverished by Tharmas are not only Jerusalem but "The Men [who] have received their death wounds" (4: 15). Even though he does not tell us who has administered these fatal blows or who the "Men" are, Tharmas's description of this deadly antagonism, in which he casts himself as a neutral bystander offering refuge, is in my view a repression of his own aggressive participation in this Oedipal strife. Hence, Tharmas is changed from victimized father to victimizing and orally aggressive infant, while Enion becomes a phallic mother retalitating against Tharmas by threatening to remove Jerusalem from her protective enclave. Moreover, the "Labyrinth," which Tharmas volunteers to build for Enion, simultaneously

anticipates the building of Golgonooza by Los, as a paternalistic defense against incest, while also representing the intestinal warehouse, storing the loot from an incestuous foray into the mother's body. Finally, these transformations are not clearly and cleanly demarcated but overlap in ways which point to the kind of conflicted structures made familiar by our discussions of Kristeva. Any appearance of a clear delineation in the shifts I describe is simply the artificial by-product of the need for analysis and understanding.

Punctuation, Syntax and the Semiotic

The shifts in meaning undergone by this passage are symptomatic of the syntactical disruptions caused by semiotic subversion of the symbolic. Grammatical infractions, including those of punctuation, are typical of semiotic drive motility as it breaches the thetic, challenges the symbolic and places uniform denotation or meaning in question:

> when poetic language . . . trangresses grammatical rules, the *positing* of the symbolic . . . finds itself subverted, not only in its possibilities of *Bedeutung* or denotation . . . but also as a possessor of *meaning* (which is always grammatical, indeed more precisely, syntactic).
>
> (Kristeva, *Revolution* 57)

Moreover, this assault on meaning produces a "polysemy [which] can . . . be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence" (Kristeva, *Revolution* 60). What Kristeva appears to argue for, then, is an ambiguity in the text produced through syntactical irregularities which are themselves a function of semiotic conflictedness. In the case of the passage discussed above, the absence of punctuation produces an ambiguity in the text which fissures Tharmas as a conflict between paternal defensiveness and incestuous assault. That is to say, the polyvalent conflictedness of the semiotic, as a rhythm of sadistic drive and

symbolic stasis, surfaces in the text through faulty punctuation and syntax in order to produce a semantic conflict homologous with that polyvalence.

Blake has chronic (semideliberate?) problems with punctuation which may be indicative of repeated semiotic disruptions within his text. In his textual notes to the *Complete Poetry & Prose*, Erdman succinctly observes that "Blake is not steady about punctuation" (E 787). One encounters these syntactical difficulties most frequently in his prophecies. Hence Erdman remarks that

> The "long resounding" lines of Blake's epics . . . confront us with a problem to which there is no true parallel. When Blake omits nearly all punctuation, as he does in most manuscript pages . . . much effort is required merely to follow the prose sense, the syntax, of some passages. . . .
>
> (E 787)

The absence of punctuation is not the only problem. Even when Blake supplies punctuation, it is often quite difficult to determine which punctuation mark he intends--a difficulty exacerbated by his engraving method. The consequence of all of this for an editor is that it is impossible to copy Blake exactly:

> his colons and shriek-marks grade into each other; he compounds a comma with a question mark; [and] his commas with unmistakable tails thin down to unmistakable periods. Moreover, one printing from his etched plate may be more lightly inked than another and miss out some apostrophes or reduce some commas to periods, some semicolons to colons or to commas or periods. . . .
>
> (E 787)

One instance in which the punctuation mark itself becomes ambiguous occurs at the beginning of the poem where a comma appears to melt into a period, subverting, once again, the clarity of syntax and sense (Ault 493). The punctuation mark in question appears in the middle of the following proposition:

Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity
Cannot Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden
The Universal Man.

(3: 4-6)

Ault has already produced a persuasive reading of these lines. Nevertheless his reading can be reinterpreted in a manner consistent with the psychoanalytic context of the present study and need not conform to his own project of examining Blake's subversions of Newtonian narrative.

When Erdman advises us that the "practical difference between comma and period . . . is almost unappreciable" he provides an important clue on how to read this passage (E 787). The "intrusive" and problematic period after the words "Cannot Exist," when read simultaneously as a comma, produces "an environment of ambiguity that subverts the possibility that only one of several mutually conflicting readings must hold." On the one hand, when read as a period, the punctuation mark comes at the end of a sentence which is itself subject to contradictory pressures. Taken alone, the first line asserts the perfect unity of the Four. Yet this assertion is immediately revised and contradicted by the words "Cannot Exist" which complete the sentence. Thus when the sentence is read in its entirety, we are left with the impossibility of a unity ever being created out of the Four. However there is a sense in which the overall thrust of this passage 'pushes through' this period, turning it into a comma. In this case, the words "but from" which appear after the period/comma "may signify that unity can exist only as derived from the Universal Brotherhood" now neatly identifed with the Four. The ambiguity of this punctuation mark thus produces an ambiguity of syntax and sense which "holds in balance the discontinuous shock of denying the perfect unity and the continuous syntax that proceeds to assert the conditions under which that unity is possible" (Ault 14-15).

Much like the ambiguity which fissures Tharmas as a conflict between paternal defensiveness and incestuous assault, this ambiguity can be read as another disruptive breakthrough of the semiotic as it scrambles the syntactical clarity associated with the symbolic. This time, however, the semantic conflict interimplicated with a subversion of grammar places the unity of the subject in question. The identity of "Man" as a "Perfect Unity" can be read, in a Kristevan context, as the thetic unity of the subject within the symbolic. Moreover, by simultaneously challenging and confirming this unity, the above passage reproduces the conflictedness of the semiotic as a dialectic between anal-sadistic fragmentation and the stasis seeking to safeguard the clean and proper body.

Semiotic subversions of delineated identity surface at other points in the text. We have already seen this with the inability of Tharmas, as a defined character, to remain stabilized as a metaphor of either incest or its prohibition. As our discussion of Night I progresses, a similar dynamic will also render the identities of Enion, Los and Enitharmon problematic. On the symbolic level their identities would be frozen as monochromatic projections of different aspects of the psyche (either incest or its prohibition). The surfacing of semiotic drive, however, collapses ego boundaries *within* each character, producing an ambiguous psychic space through the interpenetration of these aspects.

With Vala's Garden Scene, the dissolution of boundaries occurs, instead, *between* different characters. While Vala, Luvah, Tharmas and Enion are posited as different characters on the symbolic level there is evidence also to suggest their ongoing interpenetration in a variety of ways. Not only does Vala become Tharmas and Luvah become Enion, but the complex Vala/Tharmas also exchanges positions and roles with the complex Luvah/Enion. Once again this multiple collapse of boundaries is indicative of the semiotic subversions going on within the

Garden Scene and represents another perspective on the meaning of ego-dismemberment.

Tharmas and Enion: The Epistemophilic Dialectic

Enion's response to Tharmas, in the very next passage, acknowledges her voyeuristic exploration of his interior while simultaneously repressing her epistemophilic victimization of him. At one point she admits having "lookd into the secret soul of him I lovd/ And in the Dark recesses found Sin" (4: 26-27). Yet the only effects which these explorations seem to have, concern her own virtual evaporation:

> I am almost Extinct & soon shall be a Shadow in Oblivion
> Unless some way can be found that I may look upon thee & live
> Hide me some Shadowy semblance.
>
> (4: 22-24)

In her exchange with Tharmas, Enion cannot admit that her look has victimized him, even though this is tacitly suggested by Tharmas in his opening speech and made painfully clear in his subsequent response to Enion. Instead, it is Enion who suffers by being drained away into non-existence through *her* look. Hence, when Enion observes that "All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love" (4: 18) and then asks Tharmas "Why art thou Terrible" (4: 21) she blinds herself to the fact that it is her examination which makes him "Horrible Ghast & Deadly" (4: 32).

Likewise, in spite of the many clues contained in this passage, Enion's power of denial also extends to an enforced ignorance of her own victimization by Tharmas's optic penetration. Thus her request to be hidden masks a desire to hide *from* the "searching eyes" (5: 5) *of Tharmas*, (which hiddenness presupposes), it also covers this desire under the pretext that concealment will protect her from

looking upon him. Furthermore, her request to be hidden "in mazes of delusive beauty" (4: 25) alludes to the "Labyrinth" and the dynamic it suggests between epistemophilic penetration and defensive measures against this. Even though Enion has not yet been identified as the mother threatened by such an aggressive form of capture, her own discovery of "Sin" in Tharmas alludes to a subsequent passage in which the Spectre of Tharmas, as her grown offspring, discovers Enion's own sin and ravishes her. Finally, Enion may not accurately represent the nature of her own victimization, nor her active role in victimizing Tharmas, yet the very first line she speaks in the poem hints at a reciprocity between them insofar as they coexist in conditions of fear and terror. When she remarks to Tharmas that "Thy fear has made me tremble thy terrors have surrounded me" (4: 17) Enion describes a condition of mutual fear and terror which she blames on him. Yet Tharmas's fear and terror already presuppose Enion's wresting of Jerusalem from his "inmost Soul." Similarly, Enion's fear and terror suggest her victimization by an analogous process. As Night I continues, we shall discover that not only is this the case, but that the mutuality of their terror is due to a dialectic of dismemberment in which Tharmas and Enion are cast as infant and mother.

That the initial speeches of Tharmas and Enion either repress the significant details of their relationship or give us only a cursory glimpse of them is a dynamic which Ault succinctly documents:

> the bodily events that subsequently enter the narrative proper as perspective analyses of the Tharmas/Enion dialogue seem to have been already present, but unarticulated, hidden, in the gaps within and between the utterances of their initial conversation--discrepancies which seem to imply that bodily events which they are unwilling or unable to verbalize are happening as they speak. Tharmas and Enion's behaviour thus suggests that, in speaking, they are disguising bodily gestures that are so disturbing

to them that they compulsively conceal and avoid those gestures that simultaneously yearn so strongly to express themselves that they eventually force their way into the narrative proper.

(41)

Ault admits that these dynamics suggest a "psychological repression model of the narrative and text" (42) but also ultimately rejects such an approach as a "partially accurate but misleading interpretation" (41) Ault, I believe, does not pursue a psychoanalytic line of investigation because it is not relevant to his primary task of demonstrating the poem's subversion of Newtonian narrative. Yet at this and many other points in his study, he acknowledges the poem's psychoanalytic and sexual preoccupations. The sheer number of these references suggest that a psychoanalytic model may not be as misleading as Ault maintains. Accordingly this investigation begins with an observation of Ault's and takes it in a direction which differs from his. Consequently the kind of repression engaged in by Tharmas and Enion becomes symptomatic of the psychological conflict and struggle consuming the entire poem.

While Nights V, IV and II contain episodes of repression in which the symbolic seems to exert its own hegemony, Night I's opening conversation between Tharmas and Enion shows that their language is governed by pressure to repress the orally aggressive and incestuous dynamics between mother and child. In fact, one might say that the poem begins with an example of how the symbolic order manifests itself through language, and that it is language which functions as a repressive veneer over the substratum of the unconscious. Yet, notwithstanding this repressive linguistic lamination, there are slips of the tongue, performed especially by Enion, which behave like cracks in the surface through which unconscious material leaks and eventually explodes into the narrative proper. Taken together with these cracks and leakages, the Tharmas/Enion conversation

becomes an example of how the semiotic exerts its own counter-pressure against the symbolic. As Night I progresses, Tharmas and Enion, followed by Los and Enitharmon, all enact aspects of oral aggressiveness equivalent to the sadistic conflicts of the semiotic.

The semiotic begins to assert itself when Tharmas explicitly calls attention to Enion's role in converting him into a terror. Enion's voyeuristic castration of Tharmas is now introduced into the narrative as the weaving motif which, in this context, recounts her unravelling of him:

> Why wilt thou Examine every little fibre of my soul
> Spreading them out before the Sun like Stalks of flax to dry
> The infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy
> Horrible Ghast & Deadly nought shalt thou find in it
> But Death Despair & Everlasting brooding Melancholy. . . .
>
> (4: 29-33)

The major clue in this passage which supports a psychoanalytic reading of this night, and also of the entire poem, is that Enion's anatomizing of Tharmas is her dissection of "infant joy." For purposes of interpreting the above passage it is significant that the *Songs of Innocence* contain a poem with the title "Infant Joy," while *Songs of Experience* contain its apparent opposite "Infant Sorrow." In *Songs of Innocence* "Infant Joy" concerns a dialogue between mother and infant in which the child gives itself the name of "Joy" (l.5) in response to its mother's queries. The tone of the small poem is one of contentment as the child declares its own happiness, and smiles as the mother sings. From this protective enclave of reciprocated good feeling and preoedipal contact between a newborn "but two days old" (l.2) and its mother, we move to "Infant Sorrow" as an account of paternal interdiction of this mother-child dyad. The two stanzas of "Infant Sorrow," as they stand in *Experience*, anticipate the Family Romance of Los, Enitharmon and

Orc in Night V. Through birth, the child enters a "Dangerous world" (1.2) in a condition of complete and total vulnerability, "Helpless, naked, [and] piping loud" (1.3). Although no mention of the mother-child dyad is made, the second stanza of "Infant Sorrow" presupposes it when describing the father's binding restrictions of the child:

> Struggling in my father's hands:
> Striving against my swadling bands:
> Bound and weary I thought best
> To sulk upon my mothers breast. . . .
>
> (ll. 5-8)

The child struggles unsuccessfully against a bondage superimposed by the father and resigns itself to sulking upon its mother's breast, not because such a preferred object is within reach, but because it is remote and inaccessible: so close and yet so far.

Although "Infant Sorrow" narrates Oedipal strife from the perspective of the defeated child, the manuscript draft of the poem contained in Blake's Notebook (E 797) provides us with two extended versions of the poem which initially portray how the child is victorious over the parent figure, only to become an aged parent itself by the poem's end. In the first alternate version, continued after the two stanzas of "Infant Sorrow," the child grows and sets out on its own, eventually encountering a myrtle tree which stretches "its blossoms out" (1.7). As a kind of mother substitute, the myrtle stretches its limbs/ arms out to receive the child in its embrace. Unfortunately for the child a priest intervenes at this point with "holy *look*" (1.19; emphasis added) and "holy book" (1.20), acting as a surrogate father figure, a fact reinforced by another manuscript draft (E 799) substituting "⟨father⟩" (1.23) for "Priest." It is now the priest/father who apparently not only prohibits the embrace between mother and child, but also

appropriates the myrtle for himself, becoming, in the process, a phallic serpent. The last stanza of this version, however, sees the child retaliate against the father by killing him. But once this is accomplished, the child's youth disappears as he (by now the child seems unavoidably male) becomes a father himself. At no point in either "Infant Sorrow" or its two alternate versions do personal pronouns betray the child's gender. Yet the overall sense of the poem(s) is that the drafts comprise "a compact cycle-poem . . . from infancy to grey hairs" (E 798) in which a male child rebels against his repressive father only to ultimately replace him.

The second alternate version of "Infant Sorrow" (E 798) corresponds to the first insofar as the child struggles with the father at birth and grows up to encounter the myrtle tree/mother substitute, only to have this relationship interdicted by the priest/father. In this case, though, the castrating effects of the Law invoked by the priest (i.e. holy *look*/book) do more than simply prohibit incest. This time the priest's castrating glance binds the child not *away* from the mother but *to* her myrtle substitute, as if in marriage. Hence the Law not only prohibits incest but regulates the circumstances under which mother substitutes can be legally appropriated. Although this version of the poem does not directly address itself to these issues, they can be inferred from the child's protests against being bound *to* the myrtle by the priest's intervention:

> Why should I be bound to thee
> O my lovely mirtle tree
> Love free love cannot be bound
> To any tree that grows on ground. . . .
>
> (E 798)

On the one hand, the poem implies that neither the myrtle, nor the child, wishes for such a condition of bondage. Instead, both are made to suffer under the Law which the priest imposes upon them:

Oft my mirtle sighd in vain
To behold my heavy chain
Oft the priest beheld us sigh
And laughd at our simplicity. . . .

(E 798)

Once again we encounter the heavy chain of jealousy as the chief instrument of the Law of the Name of the Father, legislating the permissible limits of sexual exchange. On the other hand, the child is made to lie beneath the myrtle tree "Like dung upon the ground" (E 798). In one sense we are dealing with another configuration of abjection since the child is bound by the Law while seeking freedom from it. Yet the child's transformation into dung is particularly significant when one considers that he now becomes a substance to be fed upon by the myrtle tree's root system. Although the myrtle tree/mother substitute yearns to free her child, her subjection to the Law implicitly turns her into a castrating phallic-mother acting on its behalf. In an effort to free himself, the child smites his father/priest and uses his "gore" (E 798), instead, as nourishment for the myrtle. Ironically, the child once again immediately takes the place of his father. Hence any attempt at freeing oneself from the Law automatically reinscribes it since the son not only becomes the father but grows up to become his own eventual victim. The child, in freeing himself from the phallic mother, becomes a father himself, ultimately doomed by successive generations to becoming a murdered source of nourishment for her. In short, the poem "Infant Sorrow" and its drafts bleakly declare that there is no escape for anyone from the Law or the Oedipal strife which it supervises yet fails to represss. Everyone is both victim and victimizer; there are no victors.

The changes undergone by "infant joy" in Night I are parallel to the transformations of the poem "Infant Joy" by its counterpart "Infant Sorrow." As

Tharmas observes, infant joy, when left to itself is "beautiful" (4: 31), yet Enion's anatomy of it turns it into a "Horrible Ghast & Deadly" terror comprised of nothing "But Death Despair & Everlasting brooding Melancholy" (4: 32-33). Likewise there is a similar shift in mood between the tone of "Infant Joy" and the resigned despair of "Infant Sorrow." Because of these intertextual resonances, one can argue that the transition from an undisturbed mother-child dyad to the castrating intervention of the Law, seen in the two poems from *Songs*, can be transposed onto the change wrought on Tharmas's condition of "infant joy" by Enion's anatomizing examination. In this sense, Enion's optical and voyeuristic examination of Tharmas's fibres becomes a version of the priestly *look* which binds the child and interdicts his relationship to the myrtle tree. Also, at one point in this part of Night I, Tharmas observes that Enion, much like the myrtle tree, becomes a tree herself, sucking the life out of Tharmas as phallic mother and agent of the Law:

> O Enion thou art thyself a root growing in hell
> Tho thus heavenly beautiful to draw me to destruction
>
> Sometimes I think thou art a flower expanding
> Sometimes I think thou a.. fruit breaking from its bud. . . .
>
> (4: 39-42)

As a tree, Enion is endowed by Tharmas with the maternal characteristics of being able to blossom and bear fruit. Moreover, she consumes Tharmas just as the myrtle tree nourishes herself upon her own son as dung. Because of these connections, the explicit thematics of castration, repression and the Law in "Infant Sorrow" can be said to function as a subtext to Enion's dissection of Tharmas. Enion, in this context, becomes a phallic mother and agent of the Law's castrating interdiction of infant joy through the power of her own anatomizing glance.

Yet Blake's choice of the word "anatomy" allows for the flicker of a possible reading which conflicts with the exclusively prohibitive one above. The dominant sense of the passage dictates that we read "anatomy" not only as dissection and dismemberment but also as a process of fragmentation producing a withered, lifeless and emaciated form: a virtual walking skeleton. Nevertheless, "anatomy" has a somewhat more neutral and scientific denotation, specifying an arrangement of the parts of the body in order to display an organism's structure and the working interrelation of its constituent elements. Hence when Tharmas says that "The infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy/ Horrible Ghast & Deadly," he can be interpreted as saying two things simultaneously. On the one hand, these lines can be read as primarily describing the phallic mother's paternal agency. On the other hand, though, Tharmas may be interpreted as saying something like the following: "The incestuous component of infant joy *is* beautiful, but once one discovers how this joy actually works, one finds the body's fragmentation (into erotogenic zones) which is also productive of terror." In other words, Tharmas may be describing the infant's discovery of sexuality through anaclisis and incest during a time when the incestuous possession of the mother also entails the splitting fragmentation of the paranoid-schizoid position. Tharmas's unravelling is most certainly the result of Enion's castrating activity yet it may also be the result of taking incestuous possession of her. Although the narrative does not as yet give us any evidence of this second possibility, Enion's rape by the Spectre of Tharmas, later on in Night I, will provide us with the appropriate retroactive transformation and perspectival revision of this episode. At that point, it will become more obvious that Enion's unravelling of Tharmas is conflicted in ways recalling the psychoanalytic structures investigated in this study.

The Edenic Chora

For the most part, the remainder of Night I can be construed as driven by a kind of repetition compulsion, as episode after episode of conflictual material presents itself, all of them characterized by the antagonistic forces and drives of the semiotic. The first significant example of this concerns the intersection of the Edenic passage with the motifs of weaving and hiding. Initially we are told that in Eden, females weave "soft silken veils" (5: 1) in order to "hide them in the darksom grave" (5: 2) so that males may "live renewd by female deaths" (5: 3). If weaving is also a process of unravelling, then it would appear that females unravel themselves and bring about their own death on behalf of maintaining male immortality. Also, we have already seen how the unravelling aspect of the weaving motif interconnects with the feast motif so that drawing out the strands of a fabric becomes synonymous with drawing out nourishment from a source. Hence Enion draws nourishment from Tharmas, like a root draining the soil, while simultaneously unravelling him fibre by fibre. Yet, in Eden, this process is significantly reversed. One difference concerns the way females are now unravelled, rather than men, and apparently unravel themselves like Enion who "From her bosom [is] weaving soft in Sinewy threads" (5: 6). Another difference revolves around the implicit way in which males are nourished and renewed by this process of female death. Thus, the drawing forth of fibre from a female bosom may contain, as its subtext, the suckling of an infant male. Given these possibilities, the Eden passage can be read as a reversal of the initial episode of unravelling/weaving between Tharmas and Enion. While Enion shreds Tharmas mainly (though not exclusively) as phallic mother, the males in Eden perform similar operations upon the females, in ways which can be read psychoanalytically, as taking incestuous possession of the mother through oral aggression. The concealment provided by the "soft silken veils" woven by females in Eden

functions primarily, and implicitly, as a defense against the castrating glance of any interdictive force, while also providing an enclave within which males may hoard their incestuous booty.

Finally, the fact that the males in the Eden passage are not actively aggressive but passive recipients of female activity (i.e. weaving, dying) need not subvert this reading, especially if we accept Blake at his word, and literally read *The Four Zoas* as a *dream* in nine nights. Hence, the often difficult and confusing narrative of the poem can be viewed as the distorted and displaced surfacing of a repressed genotext. Given this working assumption, it is not surprising that the poem's surface content often attempts to deflect our attention away from the most disturbing elements which nevertheless surface past the censor, albeit in strange and sometimes reversed form. Hence, repression and censorship can be said to function throughout the poem as a defensive screen. Accordingly the poem, like any dream, becomes a compromise between disturbing unconscious material seeking expression, and survival instincts attempting to safeguard the ego's stability. Thus the apparent passivity of the Edenic males becomes a defensive reversal and displacement of their latently sadistic activity.

Although Enion initially appears to participate in this Edenic activity, a close look shows us that she also threatens to undermine it. Her response to Tharmas, "Farewell I die" (5: 5), makes it seem as if she behaves like other females who die and simultaneously nourish or renew their male counterparts. Yet rather than surrender herself to Tharmas's possession she *withdraws*, making the condition of her hiddenness from his "searching eyes" (5: 5) a function of paternal interdiction instead of incestuous incorporation. Although Enion can now admit that she is victimized by Tharmas's epistemophilic glance, she resists this look, and in doing so, continues on as paternal agent. Consequently her weaving of a "tabernacle for Jerusalem" (5: 7) is in part meant to contain Jerusalem once

Enitharmon has *taken her* from the "inmost Soul" of Tharmas. On the one hand, Enion *does* perform the functions of dying, weaving and hiding performed by Edenic females and, to this extent, participates in male renewal through oral aggressive possession of the mother. Yet, on the other hand, Enion performs these functions in a way which suggests an active interference with this kind of possession. Enion's tabernacle thus corresponds to the earlier Labyrinth in both of its significations: as an enclave where the incorporated mother can be hidden from the paternal gaze and as an enclosure defending against incestuous epistemophilia. Consequently our reception of the Eden passage, and Enion's participation in it, introduces us once again to the conflicted structures of semiotic rhythm.

The Spectre of Tharmas

The next homologously structured episode occurs in the passage describing the creation of Tharmas's Spectre by Enion's weaving:

> In torment he sunk down & flowd among her filmy Woof
> His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire
> In gnawing pain drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve
> She counted. every vein & lacteal threading them among
> Her woof of terror. Terrified & drinking tears of woe
> Shuddering she wove--nine days & nights Sleepless her food was tears
> Wondering she saw her woof begin to animate.
>
> (5: 14-20)

Once again, the narrative seems to focus explictly on the oral sadism of Enion's unravelling/weaving of Tharmas. As in the earlier anatomy of infant joy, Enion continues to draw out the fibres of Tharmas in a castrating kind of dismemberment. Yet the fact that she is also "drinking tears of woe" or that "her food was tears" also introduces a discordant element into what would otherwise be

a straightforward narrative account of paternal function. The only other place in Blake's oeuvre where tears are troped as food occurs in *Tiriel* where his sons are "nourishd with mothers tears & cares" (1: 26). Citing the intertextuality of Blake's oeuvre one more time, I suggest that the *Tiriel* passage also resonates through this part of Night I. Accordingly, Enion simultaneously enacts incestuous oral incorporation and the castration meant as its deterrent. Even though it is Enion who is doing the drinking, and not Tharmas, this can be attributed to the poem's persistent attempt, as dream, to revise the disturbing material of orally sadistic incest. The poem, however, takes a step in the direction of revealing this hidden agenda with the rape of Enion by the Spectre of Tharmas, and finally deals explicitly with it once Los and Enitharmon are born.

Enion draws "the Spectre forth from Tharmas in her shining loom/ Of Vegetation weeping in wayward infancy & sullen youth" (6: 1-2) and takes on, for the first time, an explicit maternal role which has remained implicit up until now. Although the Spectre of Tharmas, as Enion's offspring, is said to be "A shadowy human form winged" (6: 6) it is, in point of fact, a growing and developing serpent. Once it begins to "Lisp out words" (6: 4) and grow "in masculine strength augmenting" (6: 4) the Spectre threatens Enion with the "Sting of [his] tongue" (6: 15) by which she will become "Envenomd" (6: 16). The threat of being envenomed or poisoned by one's masculine and serpentine offspring is, in this context, a thinly veiled reference to the possibility of incest between Enion and the Spectre. The obvious phallic significance of the serpent lends itself to this reading, while the poisonous nature of its introjections, into the mother, intersects with anal sadistic forms of aggression and possession of the mother's interior, as well as notions of abjection in which incest is a form of defilement. In the fantasy life of the infant, the fecal column can also double as a penis, and in this particular instance, the image of the serpent overlaps both of these, having their elongated

shape while also ejaculating fluid in its bite as poison, filth or dangerous substance (i.e. feces, urine) capable of penetrating and possessing a body. The image of the serpent thus seems to be an appropriate vehicle for a fantasy corresponding to Klein's analysis of early childhood sexuality. At the same time, the representation of incest as defilement also intersects with Kristeva's notion of abjection.

This interpretation of the serpent image is not without precedent in Blake's work. Specifically, I have in mind a small poem which appears in the Songs and Ballads section of Erdman's *Complete Blake*:

I saw a chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in
And many weeping stood without
Weeping mourning worshipping

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door
And he forcd & forcd & forcd
Down the golden hinges tore

And along the pavement sweet
Set with pearls & rubies bright
All his slimy length he drew
Til upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out
On the bread & on the wine
So I turned into a sty
And laid me down among the swine[.]

(E467-468)

This poem is perhaps Blake's most explicit treatment of both the maternal abject and the paranoid-schizoid position. The chapel, from which the "many" are marginalized, is on one level the vaginal sanctuary of female genitalia. Blake upgrades the status of this holy, secret place in *The Four Zoas* when he draws a cathedral-like structure, in one of his illustrations, where the vulva is situated (Erdman, *The Four Zoas* 158). At the same time, the self-enclosed, fortress-like nature of the chapel, restricting access to the bread and wine, makes it, I believe, a transformation of the tabernacle woven by Enion for Jerusalem. As I shall argue below, these eucharistic symbols are representatives of the mother–hidden and protected from the threat of aggressive, incestuous possession. Although Blake does not obviously allude to the mother in this poem, the overall psychoanalytic context I am attempting to construct should facilitate this reading.

The second stanza introduces the unmistakable phallic symbol of the serpent, rising erect between the female legs figured forth by the chapel's pillars, and outside the hymenal door. Consequently the serpent's violently forced entry into the chapel, by breaking down the door's "golden hinges," becomes a configuration of rape and also an aggressive introjection of poisonous, excremental substances into the mother's body.

In the third stanza we begin to deal specifically with the overlapping nature of defilement and the incestuous possession of the mother's interior by excremental introjections into her. The serpentine/phallic/fecal "slimy length" is fundamentally out of place in the purity of this forbidden locale. It soils the "pavement sweet," "rubies bright," and "altar white" of the mother's tabooed body. Keeping in mind Kristeva's observation that "Defilement is incest considered as transgression of the boundaries of what is clean and proper," this forced entry, as a rupture of the pure's clean and proper limits, places us incestuously within a maternal precinct (*Powers* 85). At the same time, it begins

a process through which excremental substances gradually assimilate the mother's interior.

Finally the fourth stanza contains a reversal of the eucharistic feast. According to Kristeva, the ritual of communion celebrates the purification of defilement both as corpse and as sin, relating the Christian notion of sin directly to Old Testament dietary restrictions. After lengthy analysis, she concludes that:

> The terms, impurity and defilement, that Leviticus heretofore had tied to food that did not conform to the taxonomy of sacred Law, are now attributed to the mother and to women in general. Dietary abomination has thus a parallel--unless it be a foundation--in the abomination provoked by the fertilizable or fertile feminine body (menses, childbirth). . . .
>
> (*Powers* 110)

Hence the consumption of impure food not only transgresses dietary restrictions, but is also charged with the energy of a deeper and more fundamental infraction. As far as Kristeva is concerned, "a dietary prohibition must be understood as prohibition of incest" (*Powers* 105). Accordingly, dietary infractions are simultaneously marked as transgressions of the incest taboo, whereby the eating of abominated food is tantamount to incestuously taking in the forbidden mother.

Moreover, the Christian notion of sin is, at the bottom, a concept which acknowledges that such a transgression has already taken place:

> Through the process of interiorization, defilement will blend with guilt, which already exists on a moral and symbolic level in the Bible. But out of the merger with the more material, object-like abomination, [i.e. mother as food] a new category will be established--Sin.
>
> (*Powers* 116)

That is to say, sin is the Christian way of admitting that the mother has always already been introjected in such a way (i.e. original sin) that we are perpetually in

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In the third stanza we begin to deal specifically with the overlapping nature of defilement and the incestuous possession of the mother's interior by excremental introjections into her. The serpentine/phallic/fecal "slimy length" is fundamentally out of place in the purity of this forbidden locale. It soils the "pavement sweet," "rubies bright," and "altar white" of the mother's tabooed body. Keeping in mind Kristeva's observation that "Defilement is incest considered as transgression of the boundaries of what is clean and proper," this forced entry, as a rupture of the pure's clean and proper limits, places us incestuously within a maternal precinct (*Powers* 85). At the same time, it begins

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a process through which excremental substances gradually assimilate the mother's interior.

Finally the fourth stanza contains a reversal of the eucharistic feast. According to Kristeva, the ritual of communion celebrates the purification of defilement both as corpse and as sin, relating the Christian notion of sin directly to Old Testament dietary restrictions. After lengthy analysis, she concludes that:

> The terms, impurity and defilement, that Leviticus heretofore had tied to food that did not conform to the taxonomy of sacred Law, are now attributed to the mother and to women in general. Dietary abomination has thus a parallel--unless it be a foundation--in the abomination provoked by the fertilizable or fertile feminine body (menses, childbirth). . . .
>
> (*Powers* 110)

Hence the consumption of impure food not only transgresses dietary restrictions, but is also charged with the energy of a deeper and more fundamental infraction. As far as Kristeva is concerned, "a dietary prohibition must be understood as prohibition of incest" (*Powers* 105). Accordingly, dietary infractions are simultaneously marked as transgressions of the incest taboo, whereby the eating of abominated food is tantamount to incestuously taking in the forbidden mother.

Moreover, the Christian notion of sin is, at the bottom, a concept which acknowledges that such a transgression has already taken place:

> Through the process of interiorization, defilement will blend with guilt, which already exists on a moral and symbolic level in the Bible. But out of the merger with the more material, object-like abomination, [i.e. mother as food] a new category will be established--Sin.
>
> (*Powers* 116)

That is to say, sin is the Christian way of admitting that the mother has always already been introjected in such a way (i.e. original sin) that we are perpetually in

danger of lapsing into this condition of abjection, and are continually in need of renewed efforts at purification. Having said this, we can return to an earlier passage taken from Night I with increased understanding. Hence Enion's announcement, to "have lookd into the secret soul of him I lovd/ And in the Dark recesses found Sin" (4: 26-27), underscores our interpretation of Tharmas's concealment of Jerusalem as an incestuous act. More to the point, Tharmas's incorporation of Jerusalem into his intestinal "Labyrinth," as an incestuous and sinful act, charges the feast motif occurring throughout the poem with one of its major currents. In other words, my reading of the feast motif in *The Four Zoas* always operates from the assumption that much of the eating consumes abominated substances, and in particular, the forbidden fruit of the mother's body.

Once sin is understood as incorporated abomination and impurity, it becomes easier to understand how the rituals of confession and communion function as cleansing agents. Taking Christ as the model of spiritual (psychological) purity, the Christian aspires to this standard by first confessing that part of himself "that rebels against divine judgement, a part that is innerly impure" (Kristeva, *Powers* 120). Yet the major vehicle of transformation is the eucharist, marked by transubstantiation as a corpse cleansed and purged of all defilement. Rooting itself again in the context of Jewish law, the crucified body of Christ is not only a corpse but a corpse as "waste, transitional matter, mixture, [and] is above all the opposite of the spiritual, of the symbolic, and of the divine law" (Kristeva, *Powers* 109). On the one hand, communion thus appears once again to introduce sin back into the interiority of the soul, along with all of its psycho-sexual, incestuous baggage. Yet its effect is paradoxically to overcome abomination by consuming it in purified form:

> to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ means, on the one hand, to transgress symbolically the Levitical prohibitions, to be symbolically satiated (as at the fount of a good mother . . .) and to be reconciled with the substance dear to paganism. By the very gesture, however . . . all corporality is elevated, spiritualized, and sublimated.
>
> (Kristeva, *Powers* 119-20)

Kristeva's observations appear to deal with a Christian tradition that is primarily Catholic, while prevailing critical assessments of Blake often align his idiosyncratic version of Christian mysticism with a resurfacing of Protestant left-wing and inner-light traditions. Thus Frye connects Blake's theory of imagination to "the doctrine of inner inspiration in the left-wing Protestants" and also traces Blake's radical politics to an Anabaptist tradition (*Symmetry* 155). The Anabaptists "acknowledged no authority but that of the Scriptures and their own 'inner light,' a conception very close to Blake's theory of imagination" (*Symmetry* 152). The political anarchy of the Anabaptists, in which they reject all churches and social systems as tyrannies seeking to displace this internal authority, consequently finds its way into Blake's republican sympathies. Likewise, we have already seen how DiSalvo constructs a similar argument. Finally Michael Ferber writes that "many Blakean positions bear a family resemblance to those taken by the Dissenting interest" (25), that he resembles "the seventeenth-century antinomian tradition", that his use of the word "enthusiasm" can be traced to the "legacy of Inner Light Protestantism" (27) and, that he is the "heir of the radical Gerrard Winstanley" (31).

One can argue that because of Blake's Protestant sympathies, a Kristevan analysis of communion seems out of place in discussions of his work. According to the Catholic creed interpreted by Kristeva, communicants are literally eating Christ's body and thus consume a spiritualized corpse as a way of transforming

sin. The consecrated abject is internalized in order to purify the abject which has already been 'eaten.' Since the value of this ritual, for Protestants, is symbolic, it may not have the same psychological impact as it arguably has for Catholics. Blake's Protestantism might also disqualify a Kristevan approach to his treatment of this ritual. Yet in spite of his Protestant sympathies, one can still argue that he uses the communion ritual in *The Four Zoas* in a way that can be illuminated by Kristeva's analysis. Ironically, one can even cite Frye, who is one of the first to establish Blake's Protestant tendencies, as a critic who implicitly reads Blake's use of communion imagery in a Catholic way.

In an important sense, the unfallen condition of Albion's body is one of perpetual communion. According to Frye "all living things are part of the mangled body of Albion" insofar as this mutilation is a process in which "all things are nourished in a *mutual cannibalism*" (*Symmetry* 228; emphasis added). As participants in Albion's spiritual body, all living things metabolize each other in an "eternal world . . . of mutual co-operation in which all forms of life are nourished and supported by all other forms, as in the economy of the individual human body" (*Symmetry* 288). Frye goes on to argue for the harvest and vintage of Night IX as just such a cannibalistic feast in which bread and wine "*not only symbolize but really are part of the blood and body of a universal God-Man*" (*Symmetry*; 289 emphasis added). Consequently there is a sense in which the unfallen or regenerative status of Albion entails a process of eating his actual flesh and blood, much as the communion feast for Catholics unites them into the mystical body of Christ through a similar cannibalism.

Although cannibalism ordinarily connotes decay through a process of dismemberment and death, the dialectic of dismemberment comprising Albion's spiritual body is paradoxically free from disintegration and decomposition. Yet "[f]allen life is imprisoned in death[.]" (*Symmetry* 287). The Fall and

fragmentation of Albion is a form of disintegration in which Zoas and Emanations struggle with each other for supremacy. It also entails Albion's sleep as a subjugation to the natural world. This fall *into* and dominance *by* vegetative existence is marked by conflict and decay communicated, in part, through eucharistic imagery. In a word, the communion feast integrating an unfallen, eternal and interdependent Albion degenerates into a fallen parody of itself. When Los and Enitharmon sit down to their nuptial feast in Night I, we are told that "[t]hey eat the fleshly bread, [and] they drank the nervous wine" (12: 44). For Frye, both the communion ritual and wedding feast are vehicles for the ultimate reintegration of fallen existence:

> Eating the body and drinking the blood of a God-Man is therefore a very profound image of the final apocalypse, which in the teaching of Jesus is associated with a harvest and vintage and also with a wedding supper.
>
> (*Symmetry* 281)

As we shall see below, the appearance of the nuptial feast points to both the violent nature of the sexual relationship between Los and Enitharmon and their orally sadistic, carnivorous consumption of Enion while they aggressively suckle at her breast. Rather than signify a harmonious existence between Zoas and Emanations, this perversion of the communion/wedding feast can be read as a fragmentation which is marked, simultaneously, by conflicts surrounding incest and its prohibition. Later on in Night IX, Urizen laments his participation in this conflict, wishing that he "had never drank the wine nor eat the bread/ Of *dark mortality*" (121: 3-4; emphasis added). The Fall is thus partially configured as a corruption of the communion ritual, transforming it into a vehicle of decay and conflict over incest. In its fallen condition, it thus comes suggestively close to what Kristeva describes as abjection.

The apocalyptic redemption of Night IX, though, purifies the abject, fallen condition of the communion feast, accomplishing this through a twofold regenerative act of communion. For Frye, one aspect of this recuperative feast reverses the conflict between Tharmas and Enion which initiates the Fall. Tharmas is the "tongue of unfallen man [and] his power to absorb the nonhuman." In this respect he embodies the imaginative and "mental digestion of the material world" which is one form of communion blocked by the Fall (*Symmetry* 281). This inability to absorb the material world into the body of Man leads to his domination by vegetative existence represented in part by the decay of Tharmas. Hence Tharmas experiences "destruction in [his] bones & marrow," his skull is "riven into filaments" and his eyes become "sea jellies" floating on the tide while "begetting little [bacterial] monsters" (44: 23-26).

This decomposition is purified and reversed by the great consummation of Night IX which is suggestively both a communion feast, consuming the material world, and the sexual consummation of a marriage union. The apocalypse thus also promises to reverse the perversion of the nuptial feast/communion ritual from Night I. Consequently the "flames of mental fire" (118: 18) ignited by the apocalypse are said to be both "*Bathing*" (118: 19; emphasis added) those who will be saved while also "*licking up*" (119: 18; emphasis added) all forms of fallen corruption. This act of purification through eating contamination is a notion of communion which comes very close to Kristeva's analysis. As the first kind of regenerative communion, it lends further support to the possibility that this ritual has Catholic undercurrents throughout Blake's work.

The second regenerative communion is the harvest and vintage which not only forestalls decay but also leads to the reintegration of all life into the interdependent form of Albion:

> the winepress and mill . . . represent . . . the reuniting of all nature into the body and blood of a universal Man. Thus *the gathering–in of life to prevent its death* may be a symbol of the apocalypse. Jesus constantly uses metaphors from harvest and vintage to illustrate his teaching on the Last Judgement, and a dramatic passage in the Book of Revelation deals with the same imagery. In Night IX Blake expands this apocalyptic aspect of his bread and wine symbolism into a superb fantasia in which Luvah gathers the vintage and Urizen the harvest . . . the process is part of the great communion feast in which human life is reintegrated into its real form.
>
> (*Symmetry* 290; emphasis added)

The vintage and the harvest thus become sacrificial forms of violence that take the grape and the grain while they are in "the full power of life," rescuing them from death in the very process of their transformation (*Symmetry* 89). Although Frye's emphasis is not on the purification of that which has already decayed, communion represents a bulwark against potential decomposition and thus retains a connection to the Catholic significance of this feast. Moreover, as a preservative measure, the bread and wine taken in through communion also suggests "the myth of a God-Man who has to be slain at the height of his power in order that his strength may be scattered and divided among men instead of being . . . wasted" (*Symmetry* 289). We thus return to the cannibalistic notion of communion as a reintegration of all life accomplished, this time, through the dissemination of the God-Man's bodily fragments distributed amongst the celebrants as bread and wine. This is a slight variation on the cannibalistic feast in which divergent aspects of Albion's body consume each other to achieve union. Rather than act as a host for each other, they now consume a common host. Once again, such a host is not only a symbol but is also broken up and distributed as pieces which "really are part of the blood and body of a universal God-Man" (*Symmetry* 289).

In spite of Blake's Protestant sympathies, communion not only plays a significant role as an organizing metaphor for his myth of the Fall and Redemption but also displays some of the characteristics discussed by Kristeva in her own analysis of the ritual. As part of its redemptive function, communion consumes and purifies the abject state into which it has fallen, reproducing the moves which Kristeva outlines as part of its psychoanalytic significance. Moreover, by preserving Albion's body against decay, communion ultimately becomes a process in which the celebrants literally consume his body. They become reunited *as* and *through* the body of Albion. As the body of Albion they participate in a mutual cannibalism in which celebrants metabolize and eat each other. They are also united through Albion's body by distributing it amongst themselves. Hence communion retains its Catholic significance throughout *The Four Zoas.*

The presence of the communion meal, within the chapel, is thus intertextually suggestive as a configuration of a purified and redeemed incestuous feast. This reading is supported not only by Blake's development of the communion/feast motif in *The Four Zoas*, but also by the chapel's configuration as a pure female body that keeps its interiority safe and clean while refusing to admit the defiled phallic/fecal serpent. Yet once the serpent forces its way into the chapel, its behaviour in the fourth stanza brings about a reverse blessing or transubstantiation--undoing the purification of the communion ritual by turning the purified meal into its abominated form. By "Vomiting his poison" the serpent not only soils the meal but also ejaculates semen into the mother, impregnating her in a defiled incestuous act. The status of this act, as filth, is underscored by the serpent's other identity as fecal column, incestuously possessing the mother by spreading his poisons throughout her insides. Consequently, the poem can be read in ways which conform to the psychoanalytic models of both Kristeva and Klein.

Finally, the poem ends with the speaker wallowing freely "among the swine," giving himself completely over to the unrestrained excess of incestuous filth.

Returning to Night I, the serpentine nature of Tharmas's Spectre is, I maintain, marked by intertextual resonances from "I saw a chapel all of gold" and enacts the fantasies of "wayward infancy & sullen youth" (6: 2), seeking to possess the maternal body of Enion from which it has been excluded. The Spectre of Tharmas is now in a position to gratify the desires of his epistemophilic glance, desires which both Enion and the text refused to openly acknowledge even though her horror and recoil from Tharmas presupposed their efficacy. While earlier episodes in Night I repressed the incestuous rending of Enion by Tharmas, her rape by his Spectre makes explicit what could only be indirectly hinted at previously. Hence as the Spectre comes of age, we are told that "in his depths/ The dazzlings as of gems shone clear, rapturous in fury/ Glorying in his own eyes" (6: 6-8). In other words, Tharmas burns with desire and is "rapturous in fury" with an epistemophilia "Glorying in his own eyes."

At this point, the weaving motif returns as a configuration of Enion's rape by the Spectre in which she is not only incestuously penetrated and unravelled but also re-woven into one fabric with him:

> Mingling his horrible brightness with her tender limbs then high she soard
> Above the ocean; a bright wonder that Nature shudder'd at
> Half Woman & half Spectre, all his lovely changing colours mix
> With her fair crystal clearness; in her lips and cheeks his poisons rose
> In blushes like the morning, and his scaly armour softening
> A monster lovely in the heavens or wandering on the earth. . . .
>
> (7: 8-13)

The "Mingling" referred to above appears in much the same context in *America* when "red Orc" rapes the "shadowy daughter of Urthona" (*A* 1: 1). The subtext

here is, once again, that of incest, since the figure of Los/Urthona is the father of both Orc (as in night V) and this otherwise nameless female. Hence the sexuality figured forth is that of sibling incest. Also, the rape itself is described as a tearing apart and fragmentation which simultaneously reweaves aspects (i.e. frost and fire) of both Orc and his "sister": "O what limb rending pains I feel. thy fire & my frost/ Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent" (*A* 2: 16). Accordingly, the rape of Enion by the Spectre also mingles "her fair crystal clearness" with "his poisons" while the hardness of his "scaly armour" is also softened by her. Moreover, Enion's rape, as a "Mingling," not only presupposes that the Spectre has incestuously torn his way into her, but their wovenness into one fabric "Half woman & half Spectre" also entails their mutual possession and alteration of each other. What we may be dealing with psychoanalytically, then, is a fantasy in which the child not only tears his way into his mother, but also replaces the father within the figure of the combined parent.

Yet the father is not entirely overthrown in this passage and continues to exert an influence, creating, in effect, another manifestation of the semiotic. Given the intertextual network of relations surrounding this episode, the serpent is a poisonous, filthy and excrementitious representative of incestuous drives bent on contaminating the purity of a maternal domain clearly set apart and demarcated. To a large extent, the serpentine Spectre is such a representative. Nevertheless, he simultaneously becomes an advocate of purity and rigid lines of demarcation, fulfilling a role as paternal agent of the symbolic order:

> The Spectre thus spoke. Who art thou Diminutive husk & shell
> If thou hast sinnd & art polluted know that I am pure
> And unpolluted & will bring to rigid strict account
> All thy past deeds [*So*] hear what I tell thee! mark it well! remember!
> This world is Thine in which thou dwellest that within thy soul

That dark & dismal infinite where Thought roams up & down
Is Mine. . . .

(6: 9-15)

In this passage, the Spectre of Tharmas effectively reverses the binary opposition between purity and filth found in "I saw a chapel all of gold." It is the serpent who is now "pure" and "unpolluted" while the mother is "polluted" with sin. Likewise, it is the mother who is marginalized as an exterior "husk & shell" while the Spectre takes possession of the "dark & dismal infinite" *within* her soul, presumably to purify it. Consequently, we are left with a conflicted situation in which the Spectre penetrates Enion with his incestuous poisons while simultaneously possessing her interiority as an agent of purity and nonpollution.

Los and Enitharmon: The Feast Motif

Up until now, the feast motif has not surfaced in the narrative proper and has only been implicitly present through intertextual references connecting it to the other motifs of music, hiding/searching and weaving/unravelling. With the birth of Los and Enitharmon, however, the feast motif appears in such a way that it retroactively marks the hiding/searching dialectic and Enion's rape by the Spectre of Tharmas. The first lines describing this birth presage the pain that will be Enion's fate as mother of these two ravenous children: "with fierce pain she brought forth on the rocks her sorrow & woe/ Behold two little infants wept upon the desolate wind" (8: 1-2). The juxtaposition of these lines and their syntax are such that "sorrow & woe" and "two little infants" are in apposition as indications of how severe Enion's experience of nursing these children will be. Even though Los and Enitharmon, as newborns, are extremely vulnerable, they quickly begin draining Enion of her own strength until she can no longer maintain herself:

The first state weeping they began & helpless as a wave
Beaten along its sightless way growing enormous in its motion to
Its utmost goal, till strength from Enion like richest summer shining
Raisd the bright boy & girl with glories from their heads out beaming
Drawing forth drooping mothers pity drooping mothers sorrow. . . .

(8: 3-7)

As we shall soon see, the draining away of Enion's strength occurs through the feeding of Los and Enitharmon which quickly becomes an oral sadistic form of vampirism, sucking the life out of her. We have already seen a correlate of such oral greed in *Tiriel*, yet *The Four Zoas* elaborates upon this aspect of the feast motif, connecting it to that of weaving/unravelling. Hence the vampiric "Drawing forth" of Enion's strength corresponds to the kind of unravelling performed by Enion upon Tharmas, whose every nerve is "drawn out by her lovd fingers" (5:16).

Yet while the unravelling of Tharmas is primarily a castrating kind of dismemberment, that practised by Los and Enitharmon is directed sadistically and incestuously at Enion's breast:

They sulk upon her breast [until] her hair became like snow on mountains
Weaker & weaker, weeping woful, wearier and wearier
Faded & her bright Eyes decayd melted with pity & love. . . .

(8: 8-10)

This interconnection of the weaving and feast motifs can be read as a fantasy in which the child's incestuous desire tears its way into the mother's body and consumes it in pieces in order to appropriate it for itself. Yet this passage does not simply figure forth unallayed incestuous gratification. While growing at Enion's expense, Los and Enitharmon "sulk upon her breast" in ways which echo the father's hegemonic sexual repression found in "Infant Sorrow." Accordingly, this

passage should also exhibit the conflicts between incest and its prohibition found in other episodes of Night I.

In point of fact, these conflicts can be found in the blindness which simultaneously besets Enion and her children. It is here that the feast motif of the passage in question also intersects with the hiding/searching dialectic, epistemophilia, and the threat of castration present in voyeurism. On the one hand the characterization of Los and Enitharmon as a "sightless" wave may indicate that their epistemophilic instinct, as a desire to possess the mother's body, has been rendered inoperative. On the other hand, the melting of Enion's "decayd" eyes may signify that the potentially castrating power of her glance, as phallic mother, may also be neutralized. Taken together, each form of blindness can be read ironically as an indication that the form of vision it opposes, continues to function as that which has rendered it sightless. In other words, the passage, by configuring the blindness of both kinds of look, is in fact an inverse way of saying that both kinds of look still function simultaneously. Hence, in spite of sadistic and incestuous tendencies within the passage, we are still dealing with conflicts inherent to the semiotic.

These conflicts are also completely involved in the next passage, which simultaneously describes the repulsion and attraction of Enion vis-à-vis her children:

> Ingrate they wanderd scorning her drawing her Spectrous Life
> Repelling her away & away by a dread repulsive power
> Into Non Entity revolving round in dark despair.
> And drawing in the Spectrous life in pride and haughty joy
> Thus Enion gave them all her spectorus life. . . .
>
> (9: 4-8)

Once again the passage as a whole seems to emphasize sadistic and incestuous aspects of the feast motif. Los and Enitharmon are repeatedly said to be "drawing in the Spectrous life" of Enion, recalling the weaving motif and its implications for incestuously unravelling and dismembering the mother's body. Yet the foregrounding of the adjective "Spectrous" within the passage retroactively transforms the Enion/Spectre encounter by suggesting that Tharmas's Spectre is also dismembered while raping and unravelling Enion. Read psychoanalytically, the Enion/Spectre encounter can be reread as a fantasy re-enactment of preoedipal sexuality in which the child not only gains incestuous access to the other, but also experiences his own fragmentation, either through anaclisis or as a consequence of the paranoid-schizoid position. Nevertheless, in opposition to drawing close to Enion in order to draw out her life, Los and Enitharmon are also actively "scorning" and "Repelling" her. This reversal also suggests an interdiction and prohibition of incest which adds another complex twist to our understanding of how the "Spectrous life" is drawn out. In this instance, the unravelling of "Spectrous life" becomes a straightforward configuration of the castration complex. When one considers how all of these psychoanalytic nuances simultaneously striate a given passage in Blake, one is constantly reminded of how overdetermined and supercharged his poetry is.

The incestuous feeding frenzy of Los and Enitharmon continues as they delight "in the Moony spaces of Eno" (9: 19), a topography dominated by dismemberment. As "a daughter of Beulah" (9: 9), Eno has already set the spatio-temporal coordinates for this region. She took "a Moment of Time/ And drew it out to Seven Thousand years" (9: 9-10) and, likewise, has taken "an atom of space & opend its center" (9: 12). Eno's activity of drawing out and opening up interconnects with both the weaving and feast motifs pertaining to the unravelling of Tharmas as "infant joy." Although he is not explicitly named, Tharmas is

concealed within this passage as the "atom of space" opened up by Eno since he describes himself earlier as being "like an atom/ A Nothing left in darkness" (4: 43-44) while Enion dissects him. Hence we should expect the feasting of Los and Enitharmon, in these "Moony spaces," to be as conflicted as Tharmas's dismemberment, simultaneously distributed between castration and the incestuous fragmentation brought about either through anaclisis or the paranoid-schizoid position.

This episode begins with a fairly straightforward passage characterizing their feeding as primarily incestuous:

> Nine Times they livd among the forest, feeding on sweet fruits
> And nine bright Spaces wanderd weaving mazes of delight
> Snaring the wild Goats for their milk they eat the flesh of Lambs
> A male & female naked & ruddy as the pride of summer. . . .
>
> (8: 20-23)

The "fruits" on which Los and Enitharmon feast are implicitly Enion's maternal body which has already been described by Tharmas as "fruit" (4: 42). Similarly, the "mazes of delight" they weave, in order to snare Goats for their milk and Lambs for their flesh, repeat the "Labyrinth" employed earlier as an image of incorporation. In short, they re-enact the fantasy of tearing apart the mother's body in order to digest and claim it within their own intestines.

Yet their behaviour within these "Moony spaces" betrays signs of paternal interdiction. Hence we are told that Los and Enitharmon, as brother and sister, "kiss'd not nor embrac'd for shame & fear" (9: 25), indicating that the prohibition of (sibling) incest has already taken effect. Also, the dominance they exercise over time and space anticipates Urizenic/symbolic aspects found in later nights. Los's ability to "controll the times & seasons & the days & years" (9: 27) anticipates both his own creation of the temporal chain binding Urizen and Orc and Urizen's

subordination of the seasons in Night II, as a consequence of building a geometrically regulated universe. Likewise, Enitharmon's "controll [of] the spaces, regions, desart, flood & forest" (9: 28) reflects an aspect also present within Urizen's hegemonic and geometrical constructions.

Moreover, both Los and Enitharmon practise a monogamy which simultaneously transgresses the incest prohibition (since they are siblings) while rigorously reinforcing it. When we are told that Enitharmon "drave the Females all away from Los/ And Los drave all the Males from her away" (9: 30-31), their monogamous behaviour appears to reverse the incestuous promiscuity alluded to in *The Book of Ahania* by Ahania herself as some kind of lost golden age. In both this one local instance and in the passage as a whole, Los and Enitharmon observe paternal prohibitions while also transgressing them. This conflict, reminiscent of others in Night I, finally finds its way into the feast motif itself when Enitharmon advises Los to both suckle his mother's breast while simultaneously scorning it. Even though Enitharmon refers to her "Parents" (9: 37) in the plural, it is clear from information contained within her advice that it is Enion who suffers:

> To make us happy let them weary their immortal powers
> While we draw in their sweet delights while we return them scorn
> On scorn to feed our discontent; for if we grateful prove
> They will withhold sweet love, whose food is thorns & bitter roots.
>
> (10: 3-6)

Gratitude, apparently, is not the way to ensure a continuous and bountiful supply of "sweet delights" and "sweet love" from this parental source, transforming "thorns & bitter roots" into food capable of assuaging discontent. Instead, one must simultaneously scorn this source while drawing in nourishment from it. A clue concerning who or what this source is can be found in the knowledge that its food is obtained by grazing a variety of wild brush and grass which it digests and

turns into "sweet delight." Within the context of Night I, it is the goats of the previous passage who fit this description--snared by Los and Enitharmon for the milk they produce from just such a desolate pasture. Moreover, the fruit, milk and flesh consumed by these children in the forests are all configurations of Enion who is not only troped as "fruit" but also as the ruminant mother digested within their labyrinthine "mazes." Accordingly, Enion is both scorned and possessed by her children as they incestuously and sadistically suckle her breast and alienate themselves from it.

Los versus Enitharmon: The Song of Death, The Nuptial Feast

Enitharmon's "Song of Death" introduces a slight twist into the repetition compulsion of Night I as a pattern of conflict between incest and castration. This time the threat of castration is situated initially in the context of male (Oedipal) rivalry and then shifted onto the shoulders of a maternal representative. The song begins by establishing links between some of the characters it introduces, and the figure of Los. Prior to singing the "Song of Death," Enitharmon addresses Los, observing that he "in indolence reposest [while] holding [her] in bonds" (10: 8). Enitharmon now appears to be the one who is snared and possessed by Los, and suddenly takes Enion's place as maternal object. Yet Los is not the only one who reposes since Enitharmon introduces two new characters in similar postures. One is "The Fallen Man [who] takes his repose" (10: 10) while the other is "Urizen [who] sleeps in the porch" (10: 10). Given the common denominator of repose or sleep, it is quite possible that these new characters are interchangeable with Los.

The next phase of the song describes the subversive activity of another new character, Luvah, who differs from the others insofar as he is already awake. Not only has he "woke" (10: 11), but Luvah also takes possession of "the Horses of Light" while Enitharmon is also possessed by "Sweet laughter" (10:14). The

activity described in these lines suggests that Luvah takes the other characters by surprise and captures their possessions which implicitly also belong to Los. Likewise, the fact that Enitharmon is also "siezd" (10: 14) suggests that it is Luvah's activity, as laughter, which possesses her. Read psychoanalytically, this dual seizure becomes a configuration of Oedipal strife in which men (father and son) struggle for possession of a woman (mother).

At first it is difficult to know if it is the father or son who triumphs. Enitharmon's initial bondage to Los can be a repetition of the snaring and incestuous consumption of the mother from previous passages. This would make Luvah's activity a manifestation of paternal interdiction. Yet the subversive nature of Luvah's flight, rising "up from the Human Heart/ Into the Brain" (10: 11-12) where he does not ostensibly belong, casts him as a possible representative of the insubordinate son. The issue becomes clarified for us when we are transported, via Enitharmon's laughter, into the dream visions of Vala where Enitharmon walks with the "mighty Fallen One" (10: 15) who is still Los's alter ego. Speaking on Los's behalf, the Fallen One asks Enitharmon a series of questions, the upshot of which has her "Driving the Female Emanations all away from Los" (10: 22). According to the Fallen One, Enitharmon continues to practise the sexual possessiveness and monogamy of previous passages, reversing the incestuous permissiveness found in *The Book of Ahania.* Consequently Enitharmon becomes a representative of the paternal function and threatens Los with castration, something he acknowledges by observing that Enitharmon "Once born for the sport & amusement of Man [is] now born to drink up all his Powers" (10: 25). The father thus becomes the final victor in the song.

Los is not deceived by Enitharmon's "Song of Death" and realizes the threat that it poses in spite of her efforts to conceal this danger through the introduction of new characters. Hence "Los smote her upon the Earth" (11: 3) in

what is a defensive gesture meant to forestall the threat of castration. At the same time, Los's preemptive strike doubles as a rape in which he takes sexual repossession of the mother. This becomes clear when Los throws his arms about her loins in an act of reconciliation, revealing the sexual subtext behind his smiting:

> Los saw the wound of his blow he saw he pitied he wept
> Los now repented that he had smitten Enitharmon he felt love
> Arise in all his Veins he threw his arms around her loins
> To heal the wound of his smiting. . . .
>
> (12: 40-43)

Los's healing gesture reveals that the target of his previous attack was Enitharmon's loins. On the one hand, he may have sought to castrate and disembowel Enitharmon, retaliating in kind for what her "Song of Death" proposed and anticipated as his fate. On the other hand, Los's blow may also have been a particularly vicious kind of sexual attack, meant to underscore his defiance of the paternal prohibitions enforced by Enitharmon as phallic mother. In this case, an episode beginning with the triumph of paternal interdiction ends with its defeat, and the reconciliation of possible combatants in a marriage celebrated as excessive incestuous feasting.

Yet as soon as this possibility reveals itself, it gets swallowed up in a context reasserting the threat of castration. The "golden feast" (12: 37), at which Los and Enitharmon sit, is served with "fleshly bread" (12: 44) and "nervous wine" (12: 44) which is also the "wine of anguish" (12: 37). We have already discussed the communion ritual as a symbolic transformation of an incestuous feast through a symbolic reinterpretation of the feast itself. The bread and wine consumed at the feast are, in one sense, a version of the "flesh of Lambs" eaten by Los and Enitharmon with incestuous delight. Nevertheless, as the feast progresses, the

wine is not only turned into blood but also becomes a "wine of cruelty" (14: 20), pressed from a social slaughter anticipating the slavery of Night II. In other words, the communion feast also offers us a taste of the social conflict and repression figured forth in Night II as interconstitutional with psycho-sexual repression. The communion feast thus begins with aspects of incest and ends with its prohibition, closely paralleling Kristeva's own analysis of this ritual as a transformation of incest, built upon the last vestiges of that which it alters.

This social carnage, inflicted by a hegemonic symbolic order, descends upon "towns & villages and temples, tents sheep-folds and pastures/ Where dwell the children of the elemental worlds in harmony" (13: 14-15). However, the harmonious world possessed by these children is suddenly interrupted when

> their life is drawn away
> And wintry woes succeed; successive driven into the Void
> Where Enion craves: successive drawn into the golden feast. . . .
> (13: 16-18)

Since these children are driven into the "Void/ Where Enion craves" it seems likely that they will also be forced to go hungry. As well, it is important to remember that Enion is "drinking tears of woe" (5: 18) on the only occasion when her diet is explicitly mentioned in Night I. The incestuous implications of tears as food, from *Tiriel*, makes it possible for us to assume that if the children are being deprived, like Enion, they are also cut off from the same maternal food-stuff. Hence, the (Urizenic) winter which descends on them interdicts their feast, starves them, and ensures that "their life is drawn away" much as Enitharmon threatens to "drink up all [Man's] Powers." They will be "drawn" and unravelled much as Enion draws out the "infant joy" of Tharmas, castrating him. Ultimately, the "golden feast" into which they are drawn is a form of social cannibalism and vampirism, both derived from castration and conditioning it.

This slaughter begins when the landscape refuses to be turned into maternal "paradises stretch'd in the expanse" (13: 13) and instead resolves to be "Fattend on Human blood & drunk with wine of life" (14: 10) as a celebration of castration. Rivers run "Red with the blood of men" (14: 12) while other topographical features "drink the lives of men" (14: 14) in imitation of Enitharmon's threat to Los "to drink up all his Powers" (10: 25). Meanwhile "Villages Lament" (14: 15), "Wailing runs round the Valleys" (14: 16) and cities take on a maternal characteristic as they bemoan the change in their children: from gratifying themselves incestuously to glutting themselves on the bloody remains of a patriarchal feast:

> The Cities send to one another saying My sons are Mad
> With wine of cruelty. Let us plat a Scourge O Sister City
> Children are nourishd for the Slaughter; once the Child was fed
> With Milk; but wherefore now are Children fed with blood. . . .
>
> (14: 19-22)

Urban dwellers now feed on each other in what will become, by Night II, an antagonism between classes and social divisions, whereas they once lived harmoniously when implicitly satisfied at the incestuous fount of the mother's breast. Yet even with the apparent conclusiveness of this paternal victory, incest finds its way into the "Nuptial Song" (13: 20). When the song announces that "the sons of Men muster together/ To desolate their cities" (15: 5-6) the word "desolate" can be read in two conflicting ways. It can signify either the mutual slaughter going on within the cities, or it can imply an incestuous rape of the maternal "Sister Cit[ies]" (14: 20) by their sons. Neither possibility excludes the other, as both combine to produce yet another configuration of the semiotic at work in Blake's text.

In spite of this opening towards the maternal, the narrative of the song immediately represses the semiotic and introduces Los as the one responsible for the geometrical construction of Urizen's Mundane Shell:

> Hark I hear the hammers of Los
> They melt the bones of Vala, & the bones of Luvah into wedges
> The innumerable sons & daughters of Luvah closd in furnaces
> Melt into furrows. winter blows his bellows: Ice & Snow
> Tend the dire anvils. Mountains mourn & Rivers faint & fail
> There is no City nor Corn-field nor Orchard! all is Rock & Sand. . . .
>
> (15: 20 - 16: 5)

This passage is a condensation of Nights II, IV and V which mixes configurations of psycho-sexual repression contained in IV and V, presenting them through images most familiar to us from II. The melting of "the bones of Vala & the bones of Luvah," and the melting of Luvah's "innumerable sons & daughters . . . in furnaces" anticipate, with minor deviations, Luvah's experiences in the furnaces of Urizen in Night II. Also, once they have been "Melt[ed] into furrows," as in Night II where they run "in channels/ Cut by the plow of ages" (28: 8-9), Luvah and Vala turn everything into "Rock & Sand." This anticipates Urizen's activity in Night II "Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand" (25: 6). The present passage thus looks forward to the social consequences of the psycho-sexual and imaginative repression of Night II, weaving it into the significance of the feast in Night I.

At the same time, Los is the one who hammers away in Night I, at the construction of the Mundane Shell, while Night II credits Urizen's lions and tigers with this feat. This revision connects Los's binding of Urizen and Orc, where he also uses his hammer, with the Urizenic activity of Night II, and places this interconnection in the context of Night I's feast motif. These complex intertextual

relations within the poem are further underscored by the fact that "winter blows his bellows [while] Ice & Snow/ Tend the dire anvils" for Los in Night I. Winter, ice and snow, here as elsewhere in Blake, double as codes for that which is essentially Urizenic, even though some other character may be acting on Urizen's behalf. Hence Los forms "fetters of ice" (54: 5) when he binds Urizen in Night IV. The presence of winter, ice and snow, as Los's assistants in Night I, plus the introduction of "wintry woes" (13: 17) as paternal agents driving children into the hungering void, both point to the underlying Urizenic nature of the feast closing out Night I, and this Night's implicit connections to other significant nights in the poem such as Night IV, and Night V's image of winter as a giant bat hovering over Orc's birth. It is as if the passage currently under consideration acts as a complex linguistic knot, tying the paternal significance of the feast motif in Night I directly to related considerations in Nights II, IV and V. The sheer repressive weight of these interconnections consequently pushes Night I relentlessly towards a conclusion in which paternal function triumphs in spite of the occasional surfacings of the semiotic within the text. Although the "Song of Death," the nuptial feast, and "Nuptial Song" contain eruptions of incest, each of these openings is quickly followed by passages which reassert the paternal function, shutting down any other possibilities.

At the end of the "Nuptial Song," Los and Enitharmon sit "in discontent & scorn" (16: 18), ultimately dissatisfied by a feast which leaves them "Craving the more the more enjoying, drawing out sweet bliss" (16: 19). Once again, they appear to be caught up in a semiotic dynamic, drawing out sweet bliss from the maternal breast while simultaneously left in a condition of perpetual hunger due to the interdiction of this process. Yet even the possibility that the "sweet bliss" they enjoy is incestuous, becomes quickly covered over by the next line which declares the source of this bliss to be "From all the turning wheels of heaven & the

chariots of the Slain" (16: 20). The feast they sit down to is the by-product of war and Oedipal strife, ultimately leading to the father's triumph and the social hegemony of Urizenic values. The feast they enjoy, as it serves up bits of castrated flesh, can do nothing but leave them hungry since it refuses to prepare that which will really satisfy.

Enion as Abject

The final victory of the paternal function in Night I is sealed with the marginalization of Enion who is driven out "At distance Far in Night repelld. in direful hunger craving/ Summers & Winters round revolving in the frightful deep" (16: 21-22). As a maternal figure, capable of being incestuously permissive, Enion is scapegoated and treated as the *pharmakos*–branded as contamination, abomination and sin. Her condition of "direful hunger" also bears the mark of paternal interdiction, considering how her food (tears) is implicitly a source of incestuous gratification. Yet Enion not only hungers but is also "blind & age-bent" (17: 1), having had her voyeuristic and castrating vision eliminated earlier in Night I. This one concession to the semiotic is quickly overwhelmed by the content of her lament, which narrates the story of paternal triumph, citing how all creatures are compelled to go hungry in a "foodless winter" (17: 3). All of nature is in one way or another "famished" (18: 5) as a Urizenic winter produces a "snowy waste" (17: 5) and wilderness of emotional desolation and denied gratification.

From what we have seen in our discussions of Nights I, II, IV and V of *The Four Zoas*, the poem contains elements of an elaborate fantasy depicting various phases of psycho-sexual development. Night I introduces us to the sadism and horror of what appear to be fantasies of the paranoid-schizoid position, in which the child goes through a painful process of splitting brought on by either superego

persecution, by incestuous aggressiveness, or by both. Moreover, the conflicted distribution of sadistic drive motility in this Night also makes it possible for us to read it in terms of the semiotic. In reaction to the anxiety and horror generated by these preoedipal fantasies, Blake constructs a universe in Night II which acts as a configuration of the symbolic order. Marked retroactively by elements contained in Nights IV and V, Night II can be read as an enactment of social consequences ultimately interconstitutional with thetic phase development. The representations of the mirror stage in Night IV, and the castration complex of Night V, are retroactively superimposed upon Night II as it marginalizes and enslaves female representatives of the mother within a binary system implicitly reflecting the father's hegemony. The construction of the Mundane Shell is carried out by a team in "distinct . . . lineaments divine of human beauty" (25: 2), forcing the universe into "bondage of the Human form" (27: 18). From what we already know of Blake's aesthetic theory, this is a masculine form reflecting his own complicity with a phallocentric order in both its psychological and sociological effects. Blake's epic consequently appears to develop in ways parallel to his aesthetics. Yet this homology does not confine itself only to Blake's more repressive tendencies, as inadvertent as they might be. We have already seen how efforts to marginalize the abject in Blake's aesthetics deconstruct themselves into a zone of undecidability reintroducing the maternal *pharmakos* through the very measures intended to exclude it. As I hope to demonstrate below, this process is reproduced in Night IX through the agency of Vala's garden, in which the elements of a gender-coded binary system are set in motion and engaged in a power struggle. This conflict ultimately resolves itself into a *gynema*: an undecidable movement between incest and its prohibition, the mother and the father, which enacts once again what appears to be the deepest liberating process in Blake's text.

Night IX: Vala's Garden Scene

The Regenerate Man

The episode of Vala's Garden is introduced by material already familiar to us from Nights I and II. The reappearance of the (Fallen) Man in Night IX is still marked by the collective identity conferred upon him in Night I, by Enitharmon, when she introduces him through her Song of Death. As an alter-ego of Los and Urizen, Man, in certain contexts, condenses their more repressive and symbolic characteristics in his own activity. We have already seen this in Night I when Enitharmon's Song of Death casts them as a collective patriarchy, initially subverted by the insurrectionary activity of Luvah and Vala. As an account of Oedipal strife, Enitharmon's Song begins by narrating what appears to be a momentary victory for incestuous drives. Nevertheless her song resolves itself into a dream vision of the consolidation of paternal function and the triumph of the phallic mother.

When Night IX introduces Vala's Garden Scene, it does so through the pronouncements of the Eternal Man as he focuses on the opening incestuous and subversive aspects of Enitharmon's Song, in order to revise them. Originally usurped by both Luvah and Vala, the Eternal Man was identified as the Fallen Man in Enitharmon's Song of Death. Now, however, he is both the "Eternal Man" (125: 36) and the "Regenerate Man" (126: 3), showing signs of having reasserted himself and regained his proper place. In short, the Eternal Man triumphs by reestablishing the hierarchy upset by earlier events in Night I. Luvah and Vala are thus marginalized to where they belong, in a binary system which implicitly maintains the hegemony of a phallocentric order. Commanded by the Eternal Man to "obey & live" (126: 6) they are ordered to "return" (126: 7) into their "place the place of seed" (126: 8), being confined and localized in the genitals rather than spreading their polymorphous perverse sexuality throughout "the brain

or heart" (126: 8). The Eternal Man thus speaks on behalf of the castration complex and the way in which it forces what was previously a diffuse, incestuous dynamic into one foregrounding genital sexuality and the system of gender-coded identities made possible by it. In other words, he becomes a representative of the symbolic order as it facilitates individuation at the price of repression. At the same time, he articulates this as the return of a phallocentric system, chastising Luvah and Vala for combining "against Man Setting their Dominion above/ The Human form Divine" (126: 9-10). It is thus the "Human form Divine," and everything it represents in terms of Blake's aesthetics, which now has dominion over the incestuous possibilities of Luvah and Vala.

To be sure, Luvah and Vala do not always represent purely incestuous drives but are sometimes complicated by more prohibitive tendencies, as in the furnace episode of Night II. Yet even when thus conflicted, these configurations become charged with the alternation of drive and stasis marking the preoedipal, sadistic and incestuous dynamics of the chora. Consequently their confinement within Vala's Garden is meant, in part, to disentangle such conflicts by setting them up in a clearly delineated hierarchy in which the masculine Luvah is set over and against the feminine Vala:

> They must renew their brightness & their disorganizd functions
> Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human
> Cooperating in the bliss of Man obeying his Will
> Servants to the infinite & Eternal of the Human form. . . .
>
> (126: 14-17)

The renewal and reorganization of their "disorganizd functions" thus entails their reassuming the "image of the human" or the "Human form" insofar as this involves a phallocentric and binary distribution by gender-coded elements.

Luvah versus Vala: the Opening Gambit

Turning now to the "shadows of Valas Garden" (126: 19) we see this distribution begin as "Invisible Luvah in bright clouds hoverd *over* Valas head" (126: 28; emphasis added). The narrator interprets this as a process in which "their ancient golden age renewd" (126: 29), taking sides with the paternal function by casting its hegemony in the place of unparalleled origins, from which any deviation must be a fall. Consequently, the return to such an age appears to be secured by Luvah's position in a "golden Cloud" (126: 30), as a vantage point from which to exercise his dominance. This he begins to do by calling out to Vala in language which gives her life as his creature: "Come forth O Vala from the grass & from the silent Dew/ Rise from the dews of death for the Eternal Man is Risen" (126: 31-32). Vala is commanded to rise in imitation of the Eternal Man as she "resume[s] the image of the human/ Cooperating" (126: 15-16) in rebuilding his phallocentric order by taking the position of subordinate. Hence Vala "rises among flowers & looks toward the Eastern clearness" (126: 33), rejoicing in "the vocal wind" (126: 35) which called her from her previous oblivion.

Yet Vala does not know her maker, nor does she know the voice's origins, asking "Whose voice is this in the voice of the nourishing air" (126: 36). The feast motif resurfaces in this passage and is not initially contextualized, making it difficult to know if it signifies castration or incestuous dismemberment. Nevertheless, the "nourishing air" is related to the "nourishing sun" (127: 11) later on in the episode. This connection is also alluded to in Tharmas's lament, towards the end of the passage, when he complains to Vala that he "*fade*[s] even like a water lilly/ In the *suns* heat" (131: 3-4; emphasis added). This fading is further linked to the fact that his "loins fade" (131: 7) in what appears to be another configuration of castration. Consequently, this particular series of substitutions makes it possible for us to understand retroactively the activity of both the

"nourishing sun" and "nourishing air" as instances of the feast motif signifying castration and *not* incest.

Addressing this hidden and unknown "spirit of the morning" (126: 37), Vala seeks for her creator: "but for thee/ I must have slept Eternally nor have felt the dew of thy morning" (127: 1-2). Yet instead of searching directly for the "voice in the nourishing air" she begins to identify the sun as the object of her quest. This shift begins when the sun is first cast as a kind of messenger or harbinger of the voice:

> Look how the opening dawn advances with vocal harmony
> Look how the beams foreshew the rising of some glorious power
> The sun is thine he goeth forth in his majestic brightness
> O thou creating voice that callest. . . .
>
> (127: 3-6)

Because the "opening dawn" is correlated with "vocal harmony" the sun appears as the voice's agent, brought about and created by the voice so that it can, in turn, create others. However, in the next several lines, Vala collapses the difference between the creating voice and the sun, attributing to the sun characteristics she formerly identified with the voice: "To yonder brightness there I haste for sure I came from thence/ Or I must have slept eternally nor have felt the dew of morning" (127: 8-9). While the voice was first given credit for waking Vala from sleep eternal, so that she could feel the dew of morning, it is now the sun who receives credit for such a resurrection.

At this point, an unidentified voice breaks in, carrying the above process one step further. Rather than permit the identification of the "vocal wind" and the sun, it asserts its own difference from the sun by attributing all creative agency to it:

Eternally thou must have slept nor have felt the morning dew
But for yon nourishing sun tis that by which thou art arisen
The birds adore the sun the beasts rise up & play in his beams
And every flower & every leaf rejoices in his light
Then O thou fair one sit thee down for thou art as the grass
Thou risest in the dew of morning & at night art folded up. . . .

(127: 10-15)

The voice reinforces Vala's changing perceptions that she is resurrected in the "dew of morning" by the sun and not the voice, as originally surmised. Rather than being created by the "nourishing air" of a vocal wind, Vala is now told that responsibility for this belongs to a "nourishing sun," suddenly endowed with characteristics previously belonging exclusively to Luvah's voice.

Although this second voice is not immediately identified by the narrator, the overall context of this episode identifies it as Luvah's since there is, at this point, no one else in the garden. Moreover, as the garden scene develops, we will come to understand Luvah's intervention here as a defensive gesture in which he anticipates Vala's rage at being relegated to a subordinate position. Realizing that she is caught up in a cycle of transience, death and rebirth, Vala "complain[s] & sigh[s] for imortality" (127: 17) while rebuking the sun, her "maker" (127: 18), for having raised her only so that she may fall. In her rage, Vala will rebel against this subordination while simultaneously proclaiming her own immortality and the sun's transience, effectively reversing their original, hierarchical relationship in relation to each other. By thus changing places with the sun, as Luvah's agent and substitute, Vala threatens the stability of the binary opposition demanded by subservience to the "Human form Divine." Yet the fact that Luvah differentiates himself from the sun, even as he transposes his characteristics onto it, makes it possible for Vala to usurp the sun and overturn its position of dominance without

really threatening Luvah's primacy. In effect, Luvah creates a delimited space where Vala is allowed to assert herself rebelliously without really touching the dominant hierarchies. Nevertheless, we shall see that Vala comes dangerously close to displacing Luvah himself, even though she initiates this process in language which begins by subordinating herself to him. While she consciously continues to subordinate herself to Luvah, the vehemence of her reaction against the sun also unconsciously contains enough energy to threaten the real tyrant.

Vala versus the Sun

Vala begins her subversion of the sun by sitting down "beneath the apple trees" (127: 19), a gesture which blocks the sun's rays and effectively eliminates it in her own eyes:

> O be thou blotted out thou Sun that raisedst me to trouble
> That gavest me a heart to crave & raisedst me thy phantom
> To feel thy heat & see thy light & wander here alone
> Hopeless if I am like the grass & so shall pass away. . . .
>
> (127: 20-23)

As Ault observes: "Vala begins to assume the characteristics of Enion and the other isolated Emanations and finally begins to acquire in the narrative proper her own epithet as 'the wanderer'" (404). Vala's status as outcast also implicitly identifies her with Enion as abject, marginalized by the symbolic and lamenting its psychological and sociological consequences. In similar fashion, Vala's resistance to this kind of subordination also represents the possibility that these repressed energies, embodied in Enion and the other Emanations, are beginning to reassert themselves and disturb the relationship between center and periphery. Vala continues this process in the very next passage:

Rise sluggish Soul why sitst thou here why dost thou sit & weep
Yon Sun shall wax old & decay but thou shalt ever flourish
The fruit shall ripen & fall down & the flowers consume away
But thou shalt still survive arise O dry thy dewy tears. . . .

(127: 24-27)

Vala calls upon herself to "Rise," and usurps the role of Luvah's voice, even though her focus is on proclaiming her own immortality while reducing the sun to the transience which previously subjected her. By asserting her own constancy, Vala takes the place of the Sun as creator, and more specifically becomes both creator and creature as she creates herself, assuming one of the characteristics attributed to God by Spinoza. Hence, through this one assertive act, Vala consciously displaces the sun and effectively does the same to Luvah. Yet her potential threat to Luvah still remains on the periphery of her awareness, constituting a blindness which not only protects Luvah but also keeps Vala in a subservient position, in spite of her overthrow of the Sun.

Vala's doubts about herself and her continuing subordination to Luvah's voice exhibit themselves at the beginning of the next passage: "Hah! Shall I survive whence came that sweet & comforting voice/ And whence that voice of sorrow" (127: 28-29). Having asserted her own immortality in the lines just previous to this passage, Vala immediately undermines her recently won position as soon as she brings herself into relationship with "that sweet & comforting voice." She remains oblivious to the fact that she has already usurped that voice, and does not need to trouble herself about whether or not it will continue to sustain her as "nourishing air" or give way to the "voice of sorrow" and its predictions of her cyclical transience. Moreover, her distinction between the voice of comfort and the voice of sorrow contributes to her continuing marginalization. Having reacted with rage, and reversed the content of the voice of sorrow, Vala

still maintains her dependence on the comforting one. If she could identify these voices as one, then her acts of insubordination would render her completely independent.

Vala, however, does not do this and instead makes peace with the sun, becoming its equal as both can now "rejoice together" (127: 30) as creatures of the nourishing and comforting voice. While Vala bids farewell to the sun as it pursues its own "course" (127: 30) she turns towards Luvah's flocks which now become representatives of his hegemonic sway in this garden. Vala "walk[s] among his flocks & hear[s] the bleating of his lambs" while wishing that she "could behold his face & follow his pure feet" (127: 31-32). Not having direct access to her "maker" (127: 34) she contents herself with walking "by the footsteps of his flocks" (127: 33), asking them if they can "converse with a pure Soul" (127: 34) and tell her of his whereabouts. When the flocks fail to respond, Vala decides to "watch . . . & attend [their] footsteps" (127: 36), subordinating herself at least to them if she cannot find and follow Luvah's "pure feet." As part of her deference to Luvah, she declares that "a new song arises to [her] Lord" (128: 3). Yet as she begins her song, she also urges these flocks to "follow" her (128: 2), once again reversing the order of dependence between herself and Luvah or his agents. This turn of events introduces her song as another occasion on which Vala unconsciously threatens Luvah, only this time her subversions occur within the context of a conscious desire to submit.

Vala's Song

Vala begins her song by repeating her previous appropriation of Luvah's voice while extending her sway over all creatures through it:

Rise up O Sun most glorious minister & light of day
Follow on ye gentle airs & bear the voice of my rejoicing
Wave freshly clear waters flowing around the tender grass
And thou sweet smelling ground put forth thy life in fruits & flowers. . . .

(128: 4-7)

Vala takes on greater power as a creator, urging all of creation to "Rise up," "Follow on," "Wave freshly," and "put forth," and in doing so, appears to surpass by far Luvah's one vatic command that she "Rise." Not only is Vala a more prolific creator, but she also continues to reverse her relationship to Luvah's flocks which also tacitly reinforces a change in her relationship to him. Twice she urges these flocks to "Follow" her (128: 8,16), reversing her previous pursuit of their footsteps; and perhaps more significantly, Vala three times refers to them as "my [her] flocks" (128: 8,13,16). Finally, Vala's subversive activity, in which she appropriates Luvah's voice, role and leadership, culminates with her usurpation of his position of dominance. While Luvah was earlier placed above Vala in a "golden Cloud" (126: 30), Vala's song now effectively places her in the same locale: "I will cause my voice to be heard on the clouds that glitter in the sun" (128: 9). Hence if her voice is powerful enough to create all of nature it also appears to be powerful enough to reach Luvah's hiding place, implicitly creating him as well, and reversing Vala's relationship to Luvah as creator to creature. Yet regardless of these many acts of usurpation Vala concludes her song by acknowledging her dependence upon him and her worshipful subordination:

My Luvah here hath placd me in a Sweet & pleasant Land
And given me fruits & pleasant waters & warm hills & cool valleys
Here will I build myself a house & here Ill call on his name
Here Ill return when I am weary & take my pleasant rest. . . .

(128: 21-24)

It should be evident that the activity in Vala's garden, and the ongoing struggle between Vala and Luvah, are reminiscent of other conflicted passages and episodes discussed in this study. Specifically, we are dealing with another manifestation of what can be identified as signifying process. While Luvah acts on behalf of the symbolic order in his efforts to dominate and marginalize Vala, she in turn continually represents preoedipal incestuous drives as they repeatedly disturb efforts to repress them. It is that one brief reference to Vala as a 'wanderer' which links her to Enion and the latter's embodiment, in certain contexts, of incestuous feasting and anaclisis. Much like some of the other episodes already considered, Vala's Garden Scene reverberates with the above conflicts. Her status as abject wanderer and undercover hermaphrodite identifies Vala as a conflictual site marked by the uncanny logic of the *pharmakos*. Vala continues to struggle in her own way and eventually resolves this conflict by setting it up as a perpetual oscillation between the combatants. Once she accomplishes this, we shall see that Vala sets up a zone of undecidability much like that set in motion by "Mother outline" vis-à-vis Blake's aesthetics. The maternal function "wins" in the end, although its "victory" issues forth as a non-hierarchical arrangement between conflicting tendencies which perpetually usurp each other.

Vala's House

Once Vala finishes her song, she falls asleep and while sleeping is visited by Luvah who begins to reassert his own priority, perhaps in order to address the problem of his own vulnerability to Vala's voice. Luvah begins this process by performing a task which Vala had earlier proposed for herself. While Vala closed her song with the proposal that she should "build [herself] a house" (128: 23), Luvah resolves to perform the task himself and commands that "a pleasant house arise to be the dwelling place" of Vala as her home in "lower Paradise"

(128: 29-30). Once again, the struggle between Luvah and Vala revolves around the one word "arise" and the way in which it locates its speaker in a position of dominance. This time, it is Luvah who pronounces the word while usurping Vala's task, simultaneously relegating her to what he refers to as "lower Paradise." By reestablishing his dominion, Luvah does much more than simply step in as architect. Vala also refers to this house as a "bodily house" (129: 3) implying that Luvah's appropriation of its construction is, at the same time, an appropriation and possible enslavement of her own body. By now Vala can only observe that she has also lost control of her flocks since they have "gone up from beneath the trees into the hills" (129: 6). Stepping out of the shade provided by these trees, her flocks step into the sunlight and consequently also enter back into the realm of Luvah's agent and of Luvah himself. Hence "the hand that leadeth [Vala] doth also lead [her] flocks" (129: 7).

Vala's Narcissism

Although Luvah seems finally to have won the upper hand and appears to have avoided Vala's unconscious efforts to subvert him, the very next passage serves as a turning point in their complicated and ongoing struggle:

> She called to her flocks saying follow me O my flocks
> They followd her to the silent vall[e]y beneath the spreading trees
> And on the rivers margin she ungirded her golden girdle
> And stood in the river & viewd herself within the watry glass
> And her bright hair was wet with the waters She rose up from the river
> And as she rose her Eyes were opend to the world of waters
> She saw Tharmas sitting upon the rocks beside the wavy sea
> He strokd the water from his beard & mournd faint thro the summer vales. . . .
>
> (129: 11-18)

Vala begins by wresting Luvah's flocks from him a second time, and by moving into a "silent valley" safe from his voice, and into the shade of "spreading trees," free from the light and heat cast by his solar agent. These are, in part, offensive moves expropriating some of Luvah's possessions (and tacitly himself), while also being defensive gestures protecting Vala from Luvah's own instruments of appropriation. Yet Vala's key move occurs when she enters the river in order to view herself "within the watry glass." This narcissistic interlude is crucial since it marks the point at which she finally frees herself from her dependence upon Luvah, and her subordination to him. It also signals a turning point in her struggle with Luvah, making it possible for her to supervise events so that they will eventually lead to the creation of the *gynema* mentioned above.

In order to understand how this event achieves such significance we must read Vala's narcissism psychoanalytically. As Freud observes in his essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction," once women enter puberty and mature as sexual beings, they seem to undergo "an intensification of the original narcissism" of childhood (46). Consequently "there arises in the woman a certain self-sufficiency" comparable with the child's own "self-sufficiency and inaccessibility" (46). Hence we can read this event in the poem as an occasion on which Vala discovers her own self-sufficiency and independence, finally creating a space where she can be free from Luvah's manipulations.

Tharmas and Enion Reappear

As soon as she views herself in the "watry glass" Vala *rises* from the river, reaffirming earlier efforts at becoming her own maker by perhaps placing them upon a more secure foundation: self-sufficiency rather than an enraged kind of vengeance. Also, one would think that Vala's gaze into the "watry glass" would reveal an image of herself, which it does. Yet it also reveals an image of Tharmas,

stroking "the water from his beard" (129: 18). This conflation of images serves to identify Vala and Tharmas, something underscored by the fact that Vala's "bright hair" is also "wet with the waters" (129: 15). Throughout the remainder of Vala's Garden Scene, she will use this identity between Tharmas and herself to rearrange her relationship with Luvah into something more equitable for both of them.

The reappearance of Tharmas in Vala's garden also entails a re-enactment of the sexual strife between Tharmas and Enion in Night I. Although the struggle between epistemophilia and voyeurism (incest and castration) is initially inconclusive in Night I, the poem's opening conflict between Tharmas and Enion resolves itself in favour of the symbolic as a series of retroactive transformations turns the motifs of hiding/searching, weaving/unravelling and feasting/starving all in the direction of Urizen's hegemony in Night II. Vala's Garden Scene, however, will transform the conflict between Tharmas and Enion yet one more time, and do so in a way which is non-hierarchical. Consequently Enion must also enter the garden and is introduced through the "mournful voice" (129: 19) of Tharmas as he calls to her in terms formerly reserved for Luvah. Like Luvah, Enion is "closd in clouds" (129: 22) and like the sun which functions as Luvah's agent, Enion is also the "bringer of golden day" (129: 26) who smiles "upon the barren mountains" (129: 25). These clues to Enion's identity, as a Luvah substitute, are reinforced when Vala lifts "up her hands to heaven to call on Enion" (129: 31) once the cries of Tharmas go unanswered. When "the Eccho of her voice return[s]" (129: 32) we receive clear confirmation that Vala, in calling upon Enion, is also addressing Luvah. In Vala's call, Enion and Luvah become one and the same entity:

> Where is the voice of God that calld me from the silent dew
> Where is the Lord of Vala dost thou hide in clefts of the rock
> Why shouldst thou hide tnyself from Vala from the soul that wanders desolate. . . .
>
> (129: 33-35)

In calling upon Enion, Vala also addresses the "voice of God" as that voice which originally belonged to Luvah and which beckoned her to "Rise from the dews of death" (126: 32). Enion now becomes interchangeable with Luvah as the "Lord of Vala" and her creator. As this episode progresses, Vala will take advantage of these identifications between Tharmas and herself, and between Enion and Luvah to redistribute and disturb the elements of the phallocentric system which marginalizes her.

Vala's Maternal Realm

This deconstructive process begins when Vala is able to command Enion in ways which Tharmas cannot. Twice Tharmas calls out to Enion, commanding her to "Arise" (129: 24,27) much as Vala previously did when reversing her position vis-à-vis the sun as Luvah's agent. Tharmas, however, fails to repeat Vala's accomplishment and instead of prompting Enion's appearance, he drives her away as if she were a setting, not a rising, sun. Hence "the light of Enion faded/ Like a fa[i]nt flame quivering upon the surface of the darkness" (129: 29-30). When Vala, afterwards, repeats Tharmas's call, she manages to get a different response notwithstanding her ostensible subordination to Luvah/Enion. In spite of her self-abnegation, Vala manages to bring about Enion's solar appearance since after her summons "light beamd round her like the glory of the morning" (129: 36). By succeeding where Tharmas fails, Vala begins once again to enact her earlier subversive moves to displace both the sun and Luvah's flocks from positions of power while rising up as her own maker. Hence she "arose out of the river & girded on her golden girdle" (130: 1) as "her flocks followd her footsteps" (130: 5). Vala apparently takes up where she left off in her attempts to escape from Luvah's dominance.

Vala accomplishes this act of liberation with the help of two little children who suddenly appear to be playing in the doorway to her house. She begins to take command of the situation by recognizing the "little Boy" as Tharmas and the "bright Girl" as Enion (130: 7). By referring to Enion as "bright," Vala persists in identifying her with the sun as Luvah's agent, a gesture which simultaneously keeps before us her earlier identification of Enion as Luvah. This sets up what is perhaps the most crucial passage in Vala's garden scene. With the arrival of evening, Vala leads these children back into what is now called "her bright house" (130: 10). Although the sun has descended, it now reappears as Vala's house, hinting at the displacement which is about to occur.

Once inside, all three go to sleep until morning when "Vala awoke" due to the fact that "the Sun arose in the crystal sky" (130: 14-15). The Sun appears in its former role as Luvah's agent and causes Vala to "Rise" much as it did earlier as the "nourishing sun" by which Vala was "arisen" (127: 11). Vala's sleep in her house thus recalls the danger alluded to by the "voice of sorrow" that "Eternally [she] must have slept" (127: 10) if it were not for the rejuvenating power of the sun.

It would appear that Vala cannot escape from the sun's, and hence Luvah's, dominion. Yet as soon as she awakes, Vala calls "the children from their gentle slumbers" (130: 15) in the same way she was herself called: "Awake O Enion awake & let thine innocent Eyes? Enlighten all the Crystal house of Vala" (130: 16-17). When Enion awakes and opens her eyes to "Enlighten all the Crystal house of Vala" she becomes exactly like the sun which "arose in the crystal sky" a few lines earlier. Moreover, while the sun awakens Vala, serving as her creator, Vala immediately does the same to Enion who doubles as the sun. In this sense Vala not only becomes, implicitly, Enion's creator, but also grounds Luvah's existence, having earlier identified him with Enion. Taken as a whole, these four

lines (130: 14-17) set up a zone of undecidability in which Luvah/Enion and Vala serve as preconditions of each other, deconstructing the binary system called for by the Eternal Man at the beginning of Vala's Garden Scene.

Also, this deconstruction takes place within a distinctly maternal realm. When Vala first glimpses Enion and Tharmas as two little children, they are observed "in the door way beneath the trees" (130: 4) of her "bodily house" (129: 3). The implication here is that we are dealing with a female body which has just given birth to two little children who suddenly appear outside the vaginal door between two legs (i.e. trees). Hence when Vala leads these children back into the house where this deconstructive awakening occurs, she also leads them back into the maternal womb. What "Mother outline" does for the binary system of Blake's aesthetics, Vala's "bodily house" does for the Urizenic hierarchies set up in Night II of *The Four Zoas*. Both "Mother outline" as an advocate of patronage, and Vala as an hermaphrodite and Enion-like wanderer, become representatives of the abject as it returns to disturb the hierarchies which would marginalize them.

Immediately following this deconstructive breakthrough, Vala acts as a mediator between her two children, guiding them in their relationship so that it resolves itself into a pattern of psychological undecidability between incest and its prohibition. The power struggle between these two tendencies will not be allowed to sort itself out in ways which valorize one over the other. Vala will instead nurture them into a perpetual and oscillating conflict creating a psycho-sexual version of an interchangeable supremacy reflecting that which she has accomplished for herself.

Vala begins to chaperone their relationship to this end by addressing herself to Enion's coyness in the face of Tharmas's sexual advances:

O my sweet Children Enion let Tharmas kiss thy Cheek
Why dost thou turn thyself away from his sweet watry eyes
Tharmas henceforth in Vala's bosom thou shalt find sweet peace
O bless the lovely eyes of Tharmas & the eyes of Enion. . . .

(130: 22-25)

In turning herself away from the eyes of Tharmas, Enion hides and consequently reintroduces the hiding/searching motif which defines their antagonistic relationship in Night I. Torn between the incestuous curiosity of epistemophilia and the castrating potential of voyeurism, this motif represents a primal psychological conflict as it enacts itself through the characters of Tharmas and Enion. This conflict is implicitly present in Night IX as Tharmas and Enion take up the struggle as the champions, respectively, of incest and its prohibition. In Night I this conflict becomes embedded in other motifs which imply the ultimate triumph of the symbolic in a Urizenic, castrating and repressive feast. Vala's maternal guidance, however, leads to a different conclusion. As the mother of children born from her womb-like "bodily house," Vala encourages Enion to submit to the sexual advances of Tharmas. Her advice to Enion is that she should not turn herself "away from his sweet watry eyes." Moreover, given the intertextual resonances from Night I, this advice can also be taken as a partisan endorsement of his epistemophilic instinct. Hence her consolation, assuring Tharmas that he will "find sweet peace" in her bosom, makes it seem as if Vala will intervene solely on his behalf. She appears to speak out, unequivocally, on behalf of (sibling) incest. Yet her blessing is bestowed on *both* the eyes of Tharmas and Enion, an uncanny turn of events which valorizes *both* incest *and* its prohibition.

Tharmas and Enion

The dual nature of this blessing continues to work itself out in the text as a kind of undecidability in the relationship between Tharmas and Enion. Once blessed by Vala, they rise and go out of the house "wandring sometimes together sometimes alone" (130: 26). This variability in their wandering suggests that Tharmas and Enion exist in a condition akin to the deconstructive nondifferentiation of difference and nondifference. That is to say, their wandering is such that they both merge as one and remain separate and distinct, wandering on either side of a hymenal membrane which divides and joins. Although only a suggestion at this point, the undecidability of their relationship becomes more and more pronounced as Vala's Garden Scene comes to a conclusion.

Vala's questioning of Tharmas reveals that he is separated from Enion and subordinated to her, while simultaneously merging with her and some of her characteristics:

> Doth Enion avoid the sight of thy blue heavenly Eyes
> And dost thou wander with my lambs & wet their innocent faces
> With thy bright tears because the steps of Enion are in the gardens
> Arise sweet boy & let us follow the path of Enion. . . .
>
> (130: 28-31)

It is clear that Enion avoids Tharmas and keeps her distance from him, forcing both Vala and himself to follow her footsteps as Vala previously followed the steps of Luvah's flocks, and thus of Luvah himself. Yet while Tharmas remains separate from and inferior to Enion he simultaneously takes on her characteristic "blue heavenly" or "bright" eyes. Formerly Enion was introduced as a "bright Girl" (130: 7) and situated in "heaven" (129: 31) where she received Vala's call. Now, however, it is Tharmas who shares these aspects with her, merging with Enion's identity while remaining distant and inferior.

A second indication of how undecidable their relationship has become can be found in its cyclical nature as an oscillation placing them in relationships of inferiority and superiority to each other. Hence, when Tharmas laments his condition in the garden to Vala, he describes a scenario in which they take turns dismembering each other:

> I fade even like a water lilly
> In the suns heat till in the night on the couch of Enion
> I drink new life & feel the breath of sleeping Enion
> But in the morning she arises to avoid my Eyes
> Then my loins fade. . . .
>
> (131: 3-7)

Sexual metaphors abound in this passage as Tharmas "drink[s] new life" from Enion during the night while she uses her solar heat to castrate him during the day, and make his "loins fade". The diurnal/nocturnal alternation of these processes suggests that both Tharmas and Enion are caught up in a perpetual cycle of mutual dismemberment. They alternate between remoteness and nearness, copulation and castration, nakedness and concealment. In doing so they repeat several of the motifs that we have already encountered. By "drink[ing] new life" Tharmas employs the feast motif as a manifestation of incest, which also implicitly suggests that he has epistemophilic access to Enion. Yet by "avoid[ing]" his eyes and arising in the morning as the sun, Enion not only resists incestuous curiosity, but also subjects Tharmas to the castrating power of her own voyeuristic and solar glare.

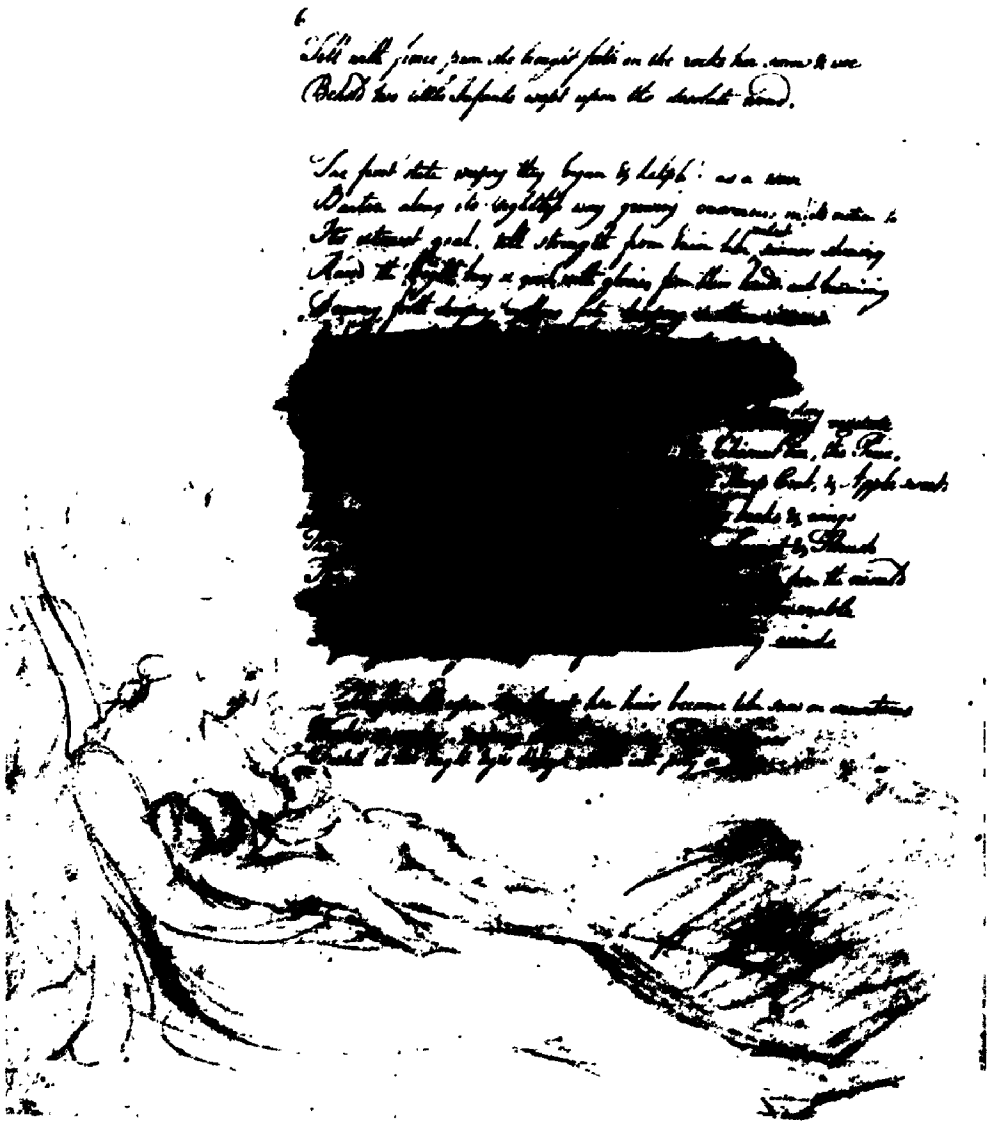
This undecidability continues right up until the end of Vala's Garden Scene as Tharmas and Enion become more and more indistinguishable from each other while still remaining separate and distinct. When Vala consoles Tharmas, yet again, she refers to him as "bright boy" (131: 8), using an appellation formerly

reserved for Enion as "bright Girl" (130: 7). Yet not only does Tharmas, in this sense, take Enion's place as the sun, but Enion also does much the same in assuming his subordinate position. Hence Enion "appears in swelling buds & opening flowers" (131: 11) taking on the aspect of the "sweet smelling ground" (128: 7) as it "put forth . . . life in fruits & flowers" (128: 7) in response to Vala's command to "Rise" (128: 4). If Enion assumes the identity of a landscape subordinate to Vala, she also tacitly assumes the same position in relation to Tharmas as Vala's substitute. This subordination is reinforced when she is made to "Follow the steps of Tharmas" (131: 14) much as Tharmas was earlier forced to follow her path. Nevertheless, while changing places and becoming less distinguishable from each other, a certain distance and separateness is still maintained Enion still hides "Behind her Veil" and turns "her modest head" (131: 12) away from Tharmas, and even when he takes her hand she follows him "reluctant[ly]" and "in infant doubts" (131: 15) suggesting that she does not wholeheartedly accept her identification as his subordinate.

The reading of this concluding aspect of Vala's Garden Scene consequently reveals that Tharmas and Enion are caught up in a rotating cycle in which they take turns as predator and prey, superior and inferior term. Insofar as they do this, they become less and less distinguishable as they take each other's place in a perpetually restructured arrangement, making any finalized hierarchy an impossibility. Nevertheless they still manage to maintain separate and distinct identities. In all of this, the pressure for synthesis comes from Tharmas while resistance to it comes from Enion. Moreover, these relationships are not neutral but are sexually charged in ways already familiar to us from Night I. From what has been said so far, Tharmas and Enion are representatives, respectively, of incestuous drives and their prohibition as these forces come to a nonhierarchical arrangement late in the poem. This is confirmed by the narrator's obervation that

"In infant sorrow & joy *alternate* Enion & Tharmas playd" (131: 17; emphasis added) while sojourning "in the Gardens of Vala" (131: 18). Based on previous analyses of the poems "Infant Sorrow" and "Infant Joy," it is fairly clear that Enion and Tharmas embody the castration complex and its incestuous rival as they work out their relationship in Vala's garden. Although they can still be identified as either "infant sorrow" or "infant joy," Enion and Tharmas simultaneously lose this distinctness in the process of alternating and reversing their positions. As a result, neither sexual tendency becomes hegemonic as the poem's conflicts are sorted out under Vala's maternal and nonhierarchical guidance.

Figure No. 9. Page 8 from *The Four Zoas.* Taken from '*The Four Zoas*' *by William Blake: A Photographic Facsimile of the Manuscript with Commentary on the Illuminations*, Cranbury: Bucknell UP, 1987. p. 122.



Notes

[1]Some time should be spent clarifying the notion of closure. On the one hand its use in this chapter is consistent with that suggested by Vlasopolos as a term synonymous with "finished" or "complete." A text like Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" lacks closure, as does Blake's *The Four Zoas* which was never engraved and thereby completed as a finished product. On the other hand this notion of closure is extended to include an aspect of the complex meaning attributed to it by Derrida as articulated in *Positions*.

Derrida's use of the term "closure" has two interrelated meanings. One of these equates closure with what Derrida refers to as a "closed system" when thought of as one of the "ahistoric motifs in the concept of *structure*" (27). What is stabilized and without development in such a classification is the principle of structurality which cuts across all historic epochs, expressing itself through a variety of interchangeable concepts. Derrida defines this principle in "Structure, Sign and Play" as that which has a "center" or "fixed origin" capable of grounding and permitting "the play of . . . elements inside the total form" (278-79). The opposition between a "fundamental immobility" and the fluidity of elements organizes the history of metaphysics insofar as this consists in a series of "metaphors and metonymies" in which "the center receives different forms or names" (279). Hence each phase in the history of the West is defined as an opposition between a center, which is distanced and immune from the contaminating influence of the structure's peripheral elements, and the transient play of these elements amongst themselves. As an example from this history, Derrida offers us the concept of sign and the opposition articulated by it between

signified and signifier, the intelligible and the sensible. One can also substitute, for this opposition, any of the other gender-coded binaries comprising this tradition as a phallocentric order.

Returning to *Positions*, Derrida describes a "double gesture" or "*double science*" which resists the closed system and its inherently violent arrangement of binary oppositions into a hierarchy. Such a double gesture begins with an act of "overturning" which assumes that

> in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-a-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other . . . , or has the upper hand. To deconstruct to opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition.
>
> (41)

Derrida thus explicitly calls attention to the politics inherent within the cultural productions of Western metaphysics which can be rendered even more specific as a politics of gender. Yet the overturning of such a hierarchy, as a form of counter-violence, always remains incomplete since "the hierarchy of dual opposition always reestablishes itself" and necessitates "an interminable analysis" of further subversions (42). When asked whether there can be "an effective transgression of closure" Derrida cautions that "every transgressive gesture reencloses us" (12). Yet although transgression "implies that the limit is always at work" we are not returned, by such a double gesture, to the original "closed formalization" of the metaphysical binary (12, 45). Rather, "logocentric closure" is exceeded insofar as such an analysis "*loosens* the limit which closes" us (36). Through such painstaking analysis we may gradually move beyond logocentrism

even though the current agenda articulated by Derrida requires that we remain uneasily within its conceptual limits:

> It is not a question of junking these concepts, nor do we have the means to do so. Doubtless it is more necessary . . . to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations; I do not believe in decisive ruptures. . . .
>
> (24)

Based on this brief survey of the deconstructive enterprise, an understanding of what Derrida also means by closure becomes clarified to include *both* the closed binary system itself *and* the simultaneous loosening of its limits. Derrida clearly understands closure as closed system. Yet there is another sense in which the deconstruction of binary oppositions is also referred to as a kind of closure. Hence when Derrida performs his analysis upon the classical terms of such an opposition he respects

> as rigorously as possible the internal, regulated play of philosophemes or epistememes by making them slide--without mistreating them--to the point of their nonpertinence, their exhaustion, their closure.
>
> (6)

Within the context of the present study, the term "closure" incorporates both the conception of it as understood by Vlasopolos and the *first* Derridean meaning as closed binary system. Lawless women in *The Four Zoas* resist closure in both these senses and ultimately produce the closure referred to by Derrida as the exhaustion of hierarchy. For the sake of clarity, however, this exhaustion is not called closure within the present work but is referred to as conflictual activity.

[2]The circularity created by these passages introducing the hermaphrodite into the text are similar to what Ault refers to as "causal circularity" (127) or "causal inversion" (135). For Ault, these circular patterns constitute another way in which Blake undermines Newtonian narrative as "the already discredited conventional principle of linear causal dependence." In Ault's view, Blake attempts to educate the reader out of the habits of Newtonian thinking by first encouraging reader expectations of a causal sequence of events only to frustrate these expectations through strategically placed episodes of textual turmoil:

> Blake initiates a seductive dialectic between the forward thrust of the dominant narrative features and the persistent reminders that subsequent events intersect with and are aspects or versions of prior events. The characters and narrator seem determined to cling to fictions that make sense of things causally, but the details of their actions and utterances work constantly to undermine these metaphysical fantasies.
>
> (113)

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